

# THE ARCHITECTS NEWSPAPER

## 08 10.28.2009

CALIFORNIA ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN WWW.ARCHPAPER.COM

\$3.95

NEW DISNEY MUSEUM TREADS LIGHTLY ON PICKY PRESIDIO



BRUCE DAMONTE

## WONDERFUL WORLD OF WALT

The Walt Disney Family Museum has no amusement park rides. Instead, the museum, which opened on October 1, is devoted to the life and times of the man synonymous with amusements of all kinds, and the approach is appropriately academic. From a design standpoint, the \$110 million project is a chance to see what architects and designers can get away with inside the historic sanctum that is San Francisco's Presidio—it is the largest preservation project in the park to date—especially in light of recent setbacks.

The museum, the product of the Walt Disney Family Foundation, is located in an 1890s barracks building right off the main parade ground. Behind it, the old Post gymnasium houses the museum offices, extra exhibition space, and the archives. The front facade of the barracks has been meticulously preserved: Per the Presidio Trust's decree, original windows and glass are in place, with a secondary pane installed behind to block noise.

In back, a two-story glass curtain wall catapults the building **continued on page 5**



THE EXPANDING GALLERY SCENE. SEE PAGE 6

RENEE MARTIN

San Francisco City Hall



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WILL SF'S BUREAU OF ARCHITECTURE SHARE THE WORK?

## INSIDER JOB

In tough times, even small jobs are worth fighting for. In March, when the city's Recreation and Parks Department (Rec Park) put out a bid for a \$21 million contract to spruce up the city's Palega Park, 11 local architecture firms responded to the RFQ/RFP, only to come up against the powerful Local 21. The union, which represents the architects and engineers employed by the city, insisted loudly that the project be kept in-house. In April, Rec Park took their case to the Civil Service Commission, the city's official arbiter on such matters, and won, rewarding the contract to architect Mark Cavagnero. But that was only after Local 21 managed to delay the project until this month.

The incident highlights an ongoing debate about who gets to design city buildings. The city of **continued on page 9**



## LIGHTING UP

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ARCHITECTS WRESTLE WITH UNDERBIDDING TO GET JOBS

## STOOP TO CONQUER

With firms still laying off large portions of their staffs and some closing their doors altogether, the economic downturn continues to pressure California architects to secure commissions however they can. According to several sources, some architects are offering clients lower project cost estimates than they can deliver, reducing services, and **continued on page 11**



COURTESY SFMOMA

ART PATRON'S DEATHBED CHANGE OF HEART DELIVERS COLLECTION TO SFMOMA

## SUDDEN LEGACY

In a deal announced just two days before his death from cancer, Don Fisher, the founder of the Gap clothing chain, bequeathed his billion-dollar modern and contemporary art collection to SFMOMA, quelling months of rumors that the collection would leave the city.

The 1,100-work collection includes some of the biggest icons of the last 60 years in art, from Andy Warhol to Richard Serra to Roy Lichtenstein, and is considered one of the best private collections of contemporary art worldwide. The move boosts the San Francisco museum further into the upper echelons of contemporary art institutions.

The announcement dovetailed with **continued on page 5**



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VOLUME 03, ISSUE 8 OCTOBER 28, 2009. THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER'S  
CALIFORNIA EDITION (ISSN 1552-8081) IS PUBLISHED TEN TIMES A YEAR  
(JANUARY, FEBRUARY, MARCH, APRIL, MAY, JUNE, AUGUST, SEPTEMBER,  
OCTOBER, DECEMBER) BY THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER, LLC, 21 MURRAY  
ST., 5TH FL., NEW YORK, NY 10007. SEND ADDRESS CHANGE TO: 21 MURRAY  
ST., 5TH FL., NEW YORK, NY 10007. FOR SUBSCRIBER SERVICE: CALL  
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INTERNATIONAL \$160.00 ONE YEAR, INSTITUTIONAL \$149.00 ONE YEAR.  
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## GETTING THE BEST

You hear it constantly. Sure, LA has fantastic residential architecture; but its public architecture is not so impressive. There are a few recent exceptions, namely Disney Hall and Caltrans. From there, it's a steep drop to a level of mediocrity undeserving of a major U.S. city.

There's certainly no lack of talent in town. So what's the problem? It's the city's procurement process. And even if LA isn't bound to the lowest bidder, as some others in California are, the standards for getting a public project are not based on design excellence, but on experience, size (generally the very largest firms), connections, and what contractors and engineers you can team up with.

Luckily the AIA/LA is trying to remedy this problem. On its October 16 legislative day, members went to city hall armed with resolutions aimed at changing the game. The recommendations are highlighted by the proposed launch of a city office of architecture and urban design, charged with overseeing design review, selecting designers (in many cases through competitions), organizing community outreach, coordinating regulating agencies, and administering project delivery. Another resolution recommends changing the city's project delivery method from design-bid-build—which also favors better-connected firms that know the right contractors and engineers—to more egalitarian and better organized methods like integrated project delivery and design assist.

"The main thing we care about is making this change so that it empowers better architecture," said Roger Sherman, co-chair of the AIA's political outreach committee. And as the AIA's own resolution puts it, "Good design not only contributes to making a place healthier, safer, more livable and delightful, it also engenders marketing and brand value that attracts prestige and prosperity."

Without better public architecture, workers in public buildings will suffer, and so will the neighborhoods around them, along with the city as a whole. Great residential architecture is important. But with a poorly built public environment, the city will continue to lose talent, and investment, to cities that are becoming, quite frankly, better places to live.

And as Sherman points out, procurement should not only be improved for public projects, but for any project—like the struggling Grand Avenue development—that receives any percentage of public money.

"There's been a de facto process of people in power just deciding what they want to happen. We need to change that, instead of just having Eli Broad operating behind the scenes," Sherman said. "It's time the city grew up a bit."

There are plenty of examples of cities with active architecture and design departments helping assure that public projects are vetted from a design perspective. They include London (where architects like Richard Rogers have played a major role in developing policy and overseeing designs), Paris, Barcelona, and, in the U.S., New York City. Los Angeles needs to follow their lead, especially in this rough economic climate, where the vast majority of ongoing work is publicly financed. If it sticks with business as usual, the city risks falling behind for years to come.

**SAM LUBELL**

## LA PLANNING COMMISSION APPROVES PRESERVATION REVAMP SAVING PLACE

LA's Planning Commission voted on September 10 to amend the city's cultural heritage ordinance, the measure's first major revamp since it was enacted in 1962. If passed, the LA Cultural Heritage Commission will have the authority to bar demolitions of designated monuments, not just delay them up to 180 days as the current ordinance permits.

"Most people think that historic cultural monuments are safe, but that's not the case," said Ken Bernstein, manager of the Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources (OHR).

The amendments, due to come before the City Council early next year, also call for further clarification of designation criteria for historic monuments; an increase in the number of Cultural Heritage commissioners from five to seven; preservation review earlier in the development process; and the removal of the current window of opportunity for demolition while landmark nominations are still pending.

The amendments were developed by OHR and its Cultural Heritage Commission following a public process that lasted well over a year. The biggest holdup, said Bernstein, was a disagreement over protecting historic interiors, which was resolved by leaving intact the commission's ability to delay, not prohibit, demolition of historic interiors.

The approval was met with criticism by some business officials, including the LA Chamber of Commerce, and in particular the Central City Association (CCA), a group of over 450 businesses in the region. "Every investment, everyone purchasing a commercial building or choosing to build housing, that means jobs," said CCA president Carol Schatz. "And if people choose not to invest, then you don't get job creation."

Bernstein noted that demolition of certain monuments can still be approved "in cases of economic hardship" or if "the public benefit of a replacement project significantly outweighs keeping the original building." He also said two of the city's seven cultural commissioners would have to be owners of historic cultural monuments. An LA Conservancy statement noted that OHR had already made "a long list of concessions" in the amendments to assuage business owners, including narrowing the scope in which buildings are reviewed under the city's historic cultural heritage ordinance and allowing for approval of renovation projects even if they don't meet the national standards for rehabilitation. **SL**



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A small, unassuming 1930s brick house on Robertson Boulevard gives little clue outside that it's a portal to a world of fashion fantasy, apart from the signature scarlet awnings and a giant parrot (a Rose Bowl flea market find). But step through the forged iron gate subtly emblazoned with his name, and you're immediately transported to the fabulous alternative reality of the iconic French shoe designer Christian Louboutin.

Having designed 14 boutiques for the brand since 2004, New York firm 212box has mastered the language of Louboutin. True to the label's image, the design plays with ideas of reflection and symmetry. The front room is anchored on one side by mirrored, arched display niches, which showcase distinctive shoes. A white-on-white tile wall bearing mysterious hieroglyphs graces the other side. The stairwell leading to the second story is clad in antique mirror panels, with a screen of Syrian handblown glass bubbles serving as a stair railing. A system of peek-a-boo shelving echoes the niche wall without being coy, while a secret VIP or bridal room lies hidden behind a sliding one-way mirror. Entry to the room is only by pressing an unseen button. **HAILY ZAKI**

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## EASY LISTENING

The gossip goldmine that is the Monterey Design Conference has delivered yet again. Somehow all the ocean mist, pine trees, and camp-like buildings (not to mention the free-flowing booze) seem to open up the floodgates. **Thom Mayne** started the fireworks with tirades against big American firms working in China and Dubai ("HOK, and those other H architects") against GM ("They have no idea") and even against rural folk ("All the intelligence in this country comes out of the cities"). Perhaps even more interesting was the war of words launched by some of the more senior architects in attendance against the fancy young whip-persnappers. After mind-bending, jargon-laden presentations by the likes of **Nader Tehrani, Antoine Predock, John Frane, and Neil Denari, William Krisel** railed against "talkatects." "I don't have fancy words or theories, I just like to draw and build," said Krisel, not-so-subtly. Later, fellow modern master **Ray Kappe** worried whether today's hippest architects really "understand the human being's relationship to buildings." He added, "I've been to [one of] **Zaha Hadid's** buildings and I found it a horrible space to stand under." Snap, that's some old-school dissing. And all those flying words must have made the designers thirsty. We saw more than one famous architect get drunk out of their minds, in some cases stumbling to their cabins in disarray. Don't worry, we aren't naming names. Yet.

## REVEALING BITS

**Stephen Ehrlich** is known to be a mild-mannered LA architect. But it looks like that wasn't always so. As part of his tribute at **Julius Shulman's** memorial service in September, Ehrlich bared not only his praise for Shulman, but also his butt cheeks. He wasn't at the event, but the Getty presented an image that Shulman took of him in his—shall we say—perkier days. He was obviously hitting the beach a lot then, because we saw some serious tan lines. Uncle Julius, maybe you had another career waiting in the centerfolds?

## YOUR PINK SLIPS ARE SHOWING

The layoffs continue unabated. But it's even more painful when the firm doing the layoffs just bought your company. Our always (well, almost-always) reliable sources tell us that architecture giant Perkins + Will has just laid off more than 25 people in its San Francisco office. Around ten of them are former employees of SF firm SMWM, which merged with Perkins + Will about a year ago. Guess that M&A plan wasn't such a good idea, was it?

SEND TIPS, GOSSIP, AND JOB FAIRS TO [EAVESDROP@ARCHPAPER.COM](mailto:EAVESDROP@ARCHPAPER.COM)



### MORPHOSIS UNVEILS FLOATING HOUSE FOR NEW ORLEANS

## ROLLIN' ON THE RIVER

On October 6, Morphosis unveiled its new housing prototype for New Orleans: the FLOAT House, whose foam base literally acts as a raft in case of flooding. Conceived for Brad Pitt's Make It Right Foundation, which is enlisting top architects to help rebuild and redesign part of New Orleans' Lower 9<sup>th</sup> Ward, the prefabricated structure rises vertically on guide posts with rising waters, floating up to 12 feet if necessary. It's the first floating house permitted in the U.S.

The house's colorful exterior, long profile, raised base, and front porch are inspired by the eclectic shotgun houses of New Orleans. But the most important element, said Morphosis principal Thom Mayne, is its functionality. "There's a lot I don't like about the aesthetic design," said Mayne, "but aesthetics are secondary." Not only does the house float, but its prefabricated structure is cheap to allow for mass production, and its sustainable elements make it completely independent from the grid. Other members of

Mayne's team included Clark Construction, Thornton Tomasetti engineers, and UCLA's School of Architecture and Urban Design.

The house base is composed of polystyrene foam coated in glass-fiber-reinforced concrete that contains all of its mechanical and electrical systems, so as to make constructing the rest of the structure—which consists of modular red fiber-cement panels and exposed galvanized steel—both easier and cheaper. The 945-square-foot house will cost about \$150,000, which amounts to about \$150 per square foot. Like many of Make It Right's houses, it's meant to be mass-produced not only in New Orleans but for communities across the world, especially those in flood zones. It's also meant to be green: with rooftop solar panels, rainwater cisterns for water use (an inverted gable roof supports collection), energy-efficient electrical systems, and even geothermal heating and cooling. The house is aiming for a LEED Platinum rating.

Mayne said that the firm is now looking for government and private sponsorship to help get the house made on a larger scale. It remains to be seen if FLOAT House and other innovative Make It Right designs by the likes of Pugh + Scarpa, Graft, MVRDV, Trahan Architects, and Kieran Timberlake will be replicated outside of their setting on the edge of the Lower 9<sup>th</sup> Ward. The foundation plans to complete 150 new homes in New Orleans by next December.

Mayne worked for two years on the house, developing the design and shepherding it through New Orleans' labyrinthine regulation process. "You don't [often] get an opportunity in this country to create housing with a major social impact," the architect said.

SL





CESAR RUBIO

**WONDERFUL WORLD OF WALT** continued from front page into the modern age. Created by walling off the courtyard that separates the barracks' two wings, it houses the largest gallery, adding an additional 15,000 square feet of space. The move shows that even if Don Fisher's vision of a glass box on the Main Post was not to be, the Presidio is still open to some architectural creativity.

"It was very tricky to make everyone happy," said Jay Turnbull of Page & Turnbull, the firm that renovated the building. Among the challenges faced by designers, the Trust wanted the old exterior walls to remain visible. In the end, the brick walls of the wings are exposed within the glassed-in gallery.

Interior architecture and exhibition design is by the Rockwell Group, the firm's largest museum project to date. The New York design firm is known for creating slick interiors for hotels and restaurants, and some of that razzle-dazzle shows up here and there. The elevator looks like a vintage train car, with pull-down shades and red velvet curtains; the bathrooms forego historical context with brightly colored sinks set in white, curved Corian countertops; and the lower level is exuberantly tiled with a pattern based on a Disney illustration. The showpiece gallery, inside the addition, has a long walkway that curves around a scale model of Disneyland as Disney originally

**Top:** Rare Mickey Mouse memorabilia; **Above:** A minute's worth of stills from *Steamboat Willie*, Mickey Mouse's debut in 1928.

envisioned it. Suspended above is an immense "video ball."

For the most part, though, the museum is a fairly straightforward recount of Disney's past. (For those wondering why the Walt Disney Family Museum is here in San Francisco instead of LA, Orlando, or Disney's hometown of Marceline, Missouri, it's largely because his surviving daughter, Diane Disney Miller, has lived here for the last 20 years.) The displays, alas, do not include animatronics à la Country Bear Jamboree. The most newfangled element at the museum is the "touch tables," which allow visitors to navigate video and images by touching icons projected onto wide tables.

After the display cases set in rooms with exposed brick, one of the last galleries provides a welcome dose of Tomorrowland. Interior and exterior design come together in a narrow space with a sculptural white wall on one side and glass on the other—a sky box with a panoramic view of the Golden Gate Bridge. On the wall, the nature documentaries that Disney produced are playing. But the real star in this gallery is the architecture of San Francisco, past and present. **LYDIA LEE**

MAYA LIN'S LATEST MEMORIAL COULD BE HER LAST

## HEADED FOR EXTINCTION

Last month's unveiling of Maya Lin's *What is Missing?*—a tribute to extinct animal species, and the second of the artist's two permanent works commissioned for the Renzo Piano–designed California Academy of Sciences in San Francisco—raised a nagging question. Is this really Lin's last memorial?

Although reports that Lin had designed her last memorial have circulated since 1982 when she completed her first, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Lin's office claims that *What is Missing?*, funded by the city's Arts Commission, is her last, as Lin herself has been saying in presentations. In her 2000 book *Boundaries*, Lin described plans for her fifth memorial as focused on the environment, and dispersed in different locations. Completed nearly a decade later, *What is Missing?*, her first multime-

dia work, has arrived.

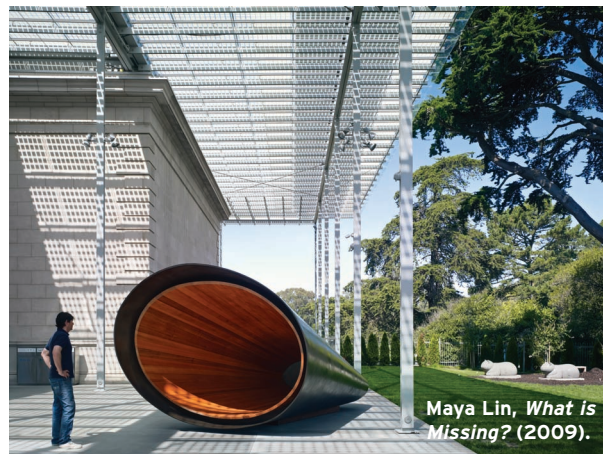
Set on the academy's east terrace, the piece's physical component is the "Listening Cone," a quietly imposing cast-bronze form lined with reclaimed redwood. It draws visitors in with the sounds of 50 extinct or endangered species and landscapes, sourced from research archives worldwide. Within the cone, compelling quotes, statistics, and images

emerge on an eye-shaped video screen.

Lin, an active environmentalist, described the cone as a portal focusing attention on the slow yet catastrophic loss of species and the habitats that support them. As Lin sees it, awareness is the first step toward action: "How can we protect them if we don't even know they're endangered?" she said.

"The Empty Room," a traveling component of the memorial, also opened last month in the Beijing Center for the Arts and at the Storm King Art Center in New York. A billboard installation in Times Square and the launch of the *What is Missing?* website are scheduled for 2010.

**YOSH ASATO**



BRUCE DAMONTE

**SUDDEN LEGACY** continued from front page an ambitious expansion plan announced last spring that will triple its gallery space, consolidate its offices, and house more educational and conservation programs. The expansion, estimated to cost between \$65 and \$85 million, would take the museum's footprint to 150,000 square feet without disrupting the facade of the building.

"San Francisco is where we raised our family and opened our first Gap store, and we want to give back to the city we love by sharing the art that means so much to us," said a Gap press release. "Doris [Fisher's wife] and I share a vision with SFMOMA to enhance its collections and programs and we are prepared to make a substantial gift to strengthen the museum's standing as one of the world's great contemporary art museums."

Since opening its Mario Botta–designed building in 1995, the museum has outgrown its space, doubling its collection to 26,000 works. The expansion, slated to go along its southern face, would free up administrative offices for new gallery space in the main museum and offer additional exhibit space in a new wing.

Hurdles remain, as the museum has yet to receive city permits and an environmental and design review. In a city where the planning review is lengthy and activists routinely stall projects, the expansion is likely to take about two years. The museum's \$24 million rooftop garden, originally scheduled to open last fall, was delayed for eight months and didn't open until last May.

Finances will also play a large role in the

expansion. While the Fisher family will likely make a financial contribution, the museum must still detail a fundraising strategy. It has already purchased adjacent land, but still needs to cobble together some additional parcels in the surrounding area.

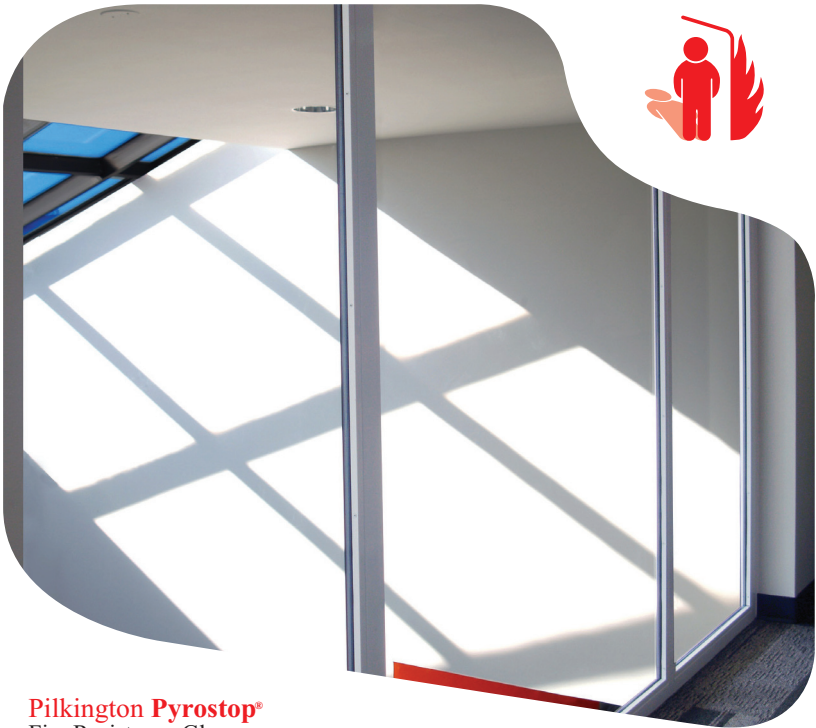
There has been no formal contract signed between the museum and the Fishers, who will retain ownership of the collection and administer the collection through a renewable 25-year-trust. Rather than be relegated to a permanent gallery, the Fisher collection will be exhibited throughout the museum and displayed alongside other works in SFMOMA's collection.

The deal follows the deflation of the Fishers' original plan to build their own museum in the Presidio. A few years ago, the Fishers submitted plans to build a modern museum in the midst of the historic Presidio parade grounds. In July, the couple withdrew their proposal after running into a buzzsaw of controversy with environmental and community activists who didn't want to mar the historic centerpiece of the former military post. The city has since been rife with rumors over whether the Fishers would pull their art collection out of San Francisco and send it elsewhere.

WRNS Studio, which worked on the latest incarnation of the Presidio museum after Gluckman Mayner Architects, will now give way to Gensler, which is conducting initial expansion planning for the museum. Arthur Gensler, who is on SFMOMA's board, declined to comment on how the Fishers' gift will impact the museum expansion.

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DESPITE ECONOMIC WOES, ART GALLERIES EXPAND

## OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

It's no secret that luxury providers—from real estate to fashion to food—have been severely hit in this economy. You might expect art galleries to be among them. Yet despite the gloomy economic forecast and the closure of several local art spaces, a wave of Los Angeles-based galleries are expanding, driven by real estate opportunities or by the completion of plans envisioned when the economy was still booming.

The attitude among many galleries is that with property prices and construction costs dropping significantly, it's a good time to expand. Gallerist Michael Kohn, who nearly doubled the square footage of his eponymous gallery in Beverly Grove recently, summed up the mood of many: "There was a confluence of factors where either I do it now, or I may never do it."

Susanne Vielmetter, who operates the Susanne Vielmetter Los Angeles Projects in Culver City, recently signed a lease for a new space on Washington Boulevard. She commissioned architect Peter Zellner to give her a place with higher ceilings and better natural light. "A year or two ago, we couldn't find anything that was reasonably priced," she said. Now, she claims, it's much easier to negotiate advantageous terms with landlords. Zellner added that city permitting for this and other projects has been smoother than usual, probably because the slow-down has reduced the backlog for city administrators.

Major contemporary art gallery Blum & Poe, which kick-started the Culver City art scene with its Escher Gunewardena-designed gallery on La Cienega Boulevard in 2003, just opened a new 27,000-square-foot building across the street. The new gallery, designed by the same firm, features flexible ground-floor exhibit spaces, an outdoor garden, private showing rooms upstairs, and even a small apartment for visiting artists. Another arts heavyweight, Gagosian Gallery in Beverly Hills, recently began plans for a major expansion overseen by Michael Palladino, a partner in the Los Angeles office of Richard Meier &

Partners Architects. The expansion will double Gagosian's square footage to 11,600 square feet, and is expected to open next year.

Others joining the parade include ACME gallery in Miracle Mile, which expanded last fall with a job overseen by Wayne Schlock at Blue Point Architecture + Interiors; and Roberts & Tilton, which just moved into a larger space—a former coffee-roasting factory rebuilt by Johnston Marklee.

Most galleries justify expansion as a competitive advantage during the recession by making them more attractive to artists, who often need more room as their work grows in scale. Blum & Poe plans to add more up-and-coming artists to its roster, while Gagosian plans to exhibit artists for longer shows. Vielmetter plans to use her additional space for private showings.

Pressure for outdoor space is driving some expansions. Gagosian's larger gallery will include a rooftop sculpture garden. "Outdoor space is what LA uniquely has to offer. When the opportunity to do a roof garden came up, how could we not?" said Deborah McLeod, gallery director at Gagosian. Even a smaller gallery, like the Chung King Project in Chinatown,

is moving to a slightly larger space later this year, with a back patio that owner Francois Ghebaly will do himself. With a few exceptions, many galleries have adopted a do-it-yourself approach over hiring an architect, moving into a relatively raw space or a previously occupied gallery.

But some architects are getting the call. Zellner has worked on ten private commercial gallery commissions, half of which are in LA. The architect's "less is more" design philosophy for galleries has proven popular, eschewing the high-end luxury retail spaces popular almost a decade ago for more raw, industrial spaces. Even Gagosian, known for its luxe aesthetic, is striving for a simpler design. "We wanted something less finished. It's a bit of a surprise when you walk in," said McLeod.

Not all galleries are expanding. In the past year, closings have included Carl Berg (who has since moved to a rent-free space in the Pacific Design Center without his former gallery partners), Bonelli Contemporary, David Patton, and Mesler & Hug, to name a few.

With such comings and goings, one question looms, said Zellner: "Is it a zero-sum game?" **MARISSA GLUCK**

Rendering of Susanne Vielmetter's new Culver City gallery.



COURTESY ZELLNERPLUS

Blum & Poe in Culver City (also shown on cover).



RENEE MARTIN



Q&A> CECILIA ESTOLANO



COURTESY CRA/LA

**Cecilia Estolano is chief executive officer of LA's Community Redevelopment Agency, making strategic investments to improve urban life. In August, the state siphoned about \$70 million from its 2010 budget to help balance its own shortfall, with plans to take \$100 million over the next three years. Estolano discusses this challenging situation, and the agency's future plans.**

**The Architect's Newspaper:** How will the state-initiated cuts affect the agency?

**Cecilia Estolano:** They effectively wipe out our new tax increment financing [derived from local property taxes], and we've had to slash our entire program: small business loans, infrastructure, new parks, work with private developers. The cuts are so deep

that in some cases, we've had to dig into our affordable housing funds.

We have reserves that we're using to fund a work program of about \$380 million. We've been trying to spend 30 percent of our available resources, distributed in 32 project areas all around the city. We're still in business, but we're not able to add new projects. Last year, we were able to put \$190 million worth of investments on the street. It's going to drop a lot this year. We still have \$140 million in commitments for projects that we're going to try to get out the door this year.

**Had you prepared for the economic downturn?**

We anticipated a 46 to 47 percent decline in tax increment revenues, but then the state came along and balanced its budget on our backs. Still, because of the bleak situation, we need to lay the groundwork for an economic recovery: infrastructure, business assistance, and program EIRs to make it easier to develop once money starts flowing; funding biomed and entertainment; establishing a Clean Tech corridor on the east side; and developing the Crenshaw corridor where it intersects with the Gold Line.

**Was the state's action legal?**

It was unconstitutional. Helping the state pay off its deficit is not

a redevelopment purpose. There is no net benefit to anyone other than the state. It's also not keeping money in the area where it's generated. We sued the state last year and won. They are appealing. We're going to sue them again. We think we'll win, but because we're a responsible agency we have to escrow that money and can't use it until we win. Legislators counted on the fact that we'd sue and it didn't matter because they wanted to balance their budget based on a house of cards that will fall apart.

**How to fix this invasive pattern?**

We've seen tremendous voter support for protecting local government resources, and numerous movements for reform. The Bay Area Council is calling for a constitutional convention. California Forward has a package of reform measures to put on the ballot, as does The League of Cities. The legislature is looking at a committee on reform. Everyone understands that the system is broken; the question is how to fix it, and will the voters trust the legislature to fix itself. They don't.

You may see significant reform of the public finance system. The state can't grow out of this crisis, not with troubling rules like a 2/3 vote to pass the budget, a 2/3 vote to raise taxes, and Prop 13 limiting how much the state can collect

from property taxes. So the state steals money from localities to balance its budget. When these cuts begin to take effect, Californians are going to be furious because they'll be paying more and receiving a lot less.

**What growth areas should architects be aware of?**

Transportation is very important. The people of LA County voted to raise their sales tax to get billions for public transit. High speed rail will literally change the landscape of California. The Anaheim to LA segment is first in line. How that gets aligned and the way it changes development patterns in the region should be of particular interest to architects. Other bright spots for architecture include universities, particularly in the community college districts, where there's still some investment flowing. And clean tech. Our Clean Tech corridor ([www.crala.net/ct](http://www.crala.net/ct)) on the east side of Los Angeles provides space to companies that plan to launch projects for heavy manufacturing related to green technologies, as well as live/work opportunities for designers. We want LA to be an entrepreneurial hub that attracts the creative intellectual capital that's powering the country. We think it can be the center of LA's manufacturing base. We're about to hear from METRO

[The LA County Transportation Authority] about whether they're going to purchase rail cars from the Italian rail manufacturer AnsaldoBreda S.p.A. If so, they'll locate their manufacturing facility in the area, creating 400 jobs. This could make LA the most important public transportation manufacturing center in the country.

**Tell me more about the Clean Tech Corridor.**

The corridor itself is much bigger than the 20 acres we own. We've spent \$14 million for a brownfield site from the state of California just west of the LA River. It used to be a Crown Coach site that was going to become a prison. We used grant money to clean it up. We're also investing in infrastructure—new roads and sewers, revitalizing the LA River, parks, and new housing—to spur more private activity there.

**How can architects be part of it?**

Right now we're in a planning mode, trying to reuse our industrial lands and reshape them in ways that can be more effective. I think you're not going to see ground-up construction. You may see the adaptive reuse of industrial spaces that will require creative architecture. It's not just that the product is green, but the whole process. Architects are leading the way in devising more efficient structures and flexible spaces.



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Zeidler House in Aptos, CA.

Sun, surf, and sand are the quintessential views for any California homeowner. So when Culver City-based Ehrlich Architects were asked to design the Zeidler House on an ocean-front bluff in Aptos, California for a dynamic couple of empty nesters, their approach was to let the home act as a modernist backdrop for the landscape outside and the vibrant lifestyle of the homeowners inside. "Most of our firm's projects explore enjoyment of the California climate

and merging the indoors and outdoors," explained principal Takashi Yanai. "This project took those ideas to the nth degree."

Two buildings are drawn together in a rectangular shape and oriented around a central courtyard. Inside the 3,000-square-foot main building (above) is a master suite, small study, and living and dining areas. The other 1,500-square-foot building houses three guest rooms for the constant stream of visitors. Both structures have large sliding glass

doors that open completely onto the courtyard. "It's the great room of the house," said Yanai of the courtyard, which includes a lap pool, spa, outdoor shower, and built-in barbeque. Additional outdoor spaces include a pétanque court in front of the main building and a sculpture garden to one side.

The space appears as one long unobstructed line when all of the doors are open, with the main connection being the outdoor courtyard. Even from within the

core of the house, the four-story, stainless steel-and-walnut staircase is fronted by a long panel of glass, so that anyone climbing the stairs looks directly over the courtyard scene. In addition, there's no air conditioning. Instead, transom windows open at the top of the stairwell, as do most of the other expanses of glass, providing natural ventilation through the breezes coming off the ocean.

Though the courtyard is central to the living space of the house, the ocean provides the main views. Every primary room of the home, from the living room to the study to the guest rooms, has a glimpse of the water. The floor-to-ceiling wall of windows in the living and dining rooms (right) looks right over the breaking waves below, an effect enhanced by the double-height ceiling in the living room, providing expansive views of both water and sky. To protect against sun damage, high-performance glass and mechanized shades were installed throughout. A roof terrace with a glass balcony tops the main building.

As for the architecture itself, it's understated and subdued to highlight the surroundings. A fluted cast-glass wall flanks the entrance to the house and is a "riff on the play of light on the



MATTHEW MILLMAN

ocean surface," said Yanai of its milky opacity. The glass flows smoothly into an exterior siding of white burnished stucco, and extends around the boundaries of both buildings. A long wall of the courtyard is concrete block, as is the fireplace wall in the main building. Inside, walls are all white, and the ground floors are stained concrete. The only punctuations of color are the warmth of walnut millwork and the homeowners' eclectic modern art collection that hangs on the tall living room wall and throughout the rest of the house. Even the light fixtures are all recessed can lights, so that there aren't the distractions of hanging pendants or wall sconces. The overall effect is a cool, monochromatic canvas of smoothly conjoining geometric forms devoid of any curves or extraneous fittings.

AMARA HOLSTEIN



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While the MRED curriculum is always evolving to meet the needs of students, the structure remains constant: fundamentals matter and USC MRED graduates leave the program with the tools and knowledge required to meet market conditions, whatever they may be.

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**INSIDER JOB** continued from front page

San Francisco runs an architecture department that is atypically large. Within the Department of Public Works (DPW), the Bureau of Architecture has a 65-person staff, including 27 licensed architects, 28 associates and assistants, and ten support staff. Among private firms in San Francisco, it would definitely be one of the larger operations. It is in charge of maintaining some 400 buildings owned by the city, and does design work and project management for construction of new city buildings. Of the bureau's 134 current projects, 70 percent are designed by the bureau, the rest by consultants. Twenty of the city's largest projects, like Laguna Honda Hospital, are handled by a separate group, the Bureau of Project Management.

It's not uncommon for cities to have an architecture department, but not all major metropolises have evolved in the same way. LA has an architectural division of about 80 people, which contracts out about 50 percent of its design work. Meanwhile, in New York and Chicago, nearly all new building design is contracted out.

Many architects agree that outsourcing is a great way to support small firms while guaranteeing high-quality work. Craig Hartman of SOM, who worked in Chicago before coming to San Francisco in 1990, said in an interview, "You certainly need a city advocate for architecture, to help the city commission architects who can provide the best design quality and services. But is it the right thing to have a public architecture firm, operating on taxpayer dollars, that has no competition? Fire stations and libraries are the kinds of projects that would be perfect for the city's small, highly talented design firms. In any economy, you want to have architects that are competing based on architectural excellence and their ability to deliver projects on time and within budget."

While private architects are loath to speak critically about the bureau because of their interest in getting work from the city, landscape designer Topher Delaney

has publicly raised issues about the quality of the bureau's designs. At a February SF Arts Commission meeting, Delaney commented that the bureau's proposed structures for the Public Utilities Commission didn't "measure up to work being done around the world."

The Bureau of Architecture has been even larger in the past: In the early '90s, it doubled to about 100 people after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake. There was lots of seismic retrofitting to be done: the renovation of the City Hall, Opera House, and Civic Auditorium, along with several police and fire stations. For the last three years, the bureau has been helmed by Gary Hoy. With the organization since 1991, Hoy believes the current level of staffing is "appropriate." The "city has the authority to do its own architecture, there is consistency in the level of quality they get, and they can save money over the private sector," Hoy said. "Part of the reason I joined is to help the city be a good client to the private sector."

One way that the department could speed work to outside firms would be to have a list of prequalified architects and contractors, as other municipalities have done. The department is working on a proposal but has not formally submitted it to the city board for consideration. Of the current RFP/RFQ process, Hoy admitted: "We don't rate design criteria as highly as the quality of service provided: things like change orders, errors and omissions, and delivering on time. Those aspects are far more important to the city, because they're about controlling costs."

Much of the bureau's work is not very glamorous: interior renovations of courthouses, bringing holding cells up to code, ADA upgrades, and public utilities boxes. But these days, that work might sound pretty good to San Francisco's struggling firms. "There's contention [about public work allocation] during downturns," said Charles Higuera, an architect who spent 25 years in private practice before joining the Bureau of Project Management. "When everyone's busy, no one cares." **LL**



COURTESY ALLIED WORKS

**UNVEILED**

**CANTOS MUSIC FOUNDATION NATIONAL MUSIC CENTER**

A small hotel in Calgary is about to be transformed into one of Canada's major cultural institutions with the help of Allied Works Architecture.

In late September, Brad Cloepfil's Portland-based firm bested four notable

competitors (Jean Nouvel, Diller Scofidio + Renfro, SPF:architects, and Saucier + Perrotte of Canada) to be named designers of the Cantos Music Foundation's new National Music Center. The \$75 million, 80,000-square-foot complex will include an education research center, a museum, recording studios, a radio station, and a live music venue.

The complex will consist of eight 96-foot-tall towers, each perforated with elliptical voids meant to engage the raw and open landscapes of Canada, according to Cloepfil. Copper and wood will dominate the interior, bouncing light and sound and providing warmth, while bridges will stitch spaces together. The lobby is dominated by an informal amphitheater, with a performance space located on the floor above. A central stairway serves as the transi-

tion to individual galleries on the upper floors. Each gallery will be configured for acoustical separation and customization. Windows, clerestories, and the voids will provide visual connections to the city.

The main building will connect via skybridge to the historic King Eddy Hotel, once a mecca for jazz in the city, which Allied Works will expand into a new music venue. Construction on that phase is expected to be completed by 2012, with the rest of the complex finished the following year. "It's not about image or form but a quality and spirit," Cloepfil said. "It's grounded in the nature of the institution and site."

**MARTINA DOLEJSOVA**

Architect: **Allied Works Architecture**  
Associate Architect: **BKDI**  
Location: **Calgary, Canada**  
Construction: **2013**



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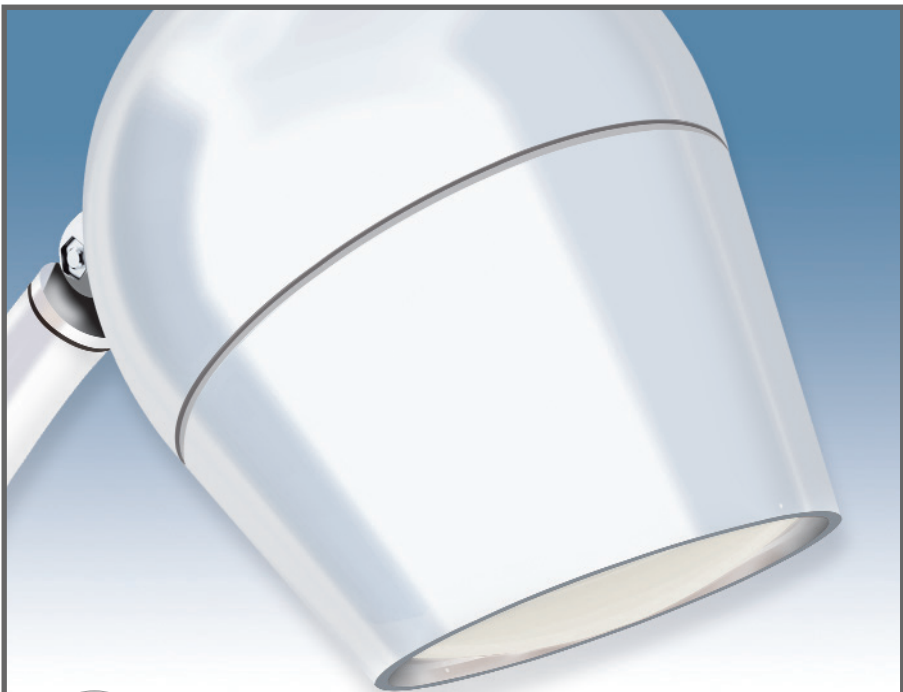
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THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER OCTOBER 28, 2009



TIM STREET-PORTER

## FIRST SCHOOL ON AMBASSADOR HOTEL SITE OPENS

## HISTORY LESSONS

It's only been about three years since Myron Hunt's Mediterranean-style Ambassador Hotel—home of the Rat Pack, the Oscars, and, more somberly, the shooting of RFK—was unceremoniously torn down. But already, out of its rubble the skeleton of a major new school complex is rising. With an elementary, middle, and high school, the Central LA Learning Center No. 1, as it's called, borrows much of its form from the immense Ambassador Hotel whose decorative fittings were sold at a public auction in September 2005.

On the south end of the complex, the first phase, the new elementary school, opened its doors to 800 K-5 students on September 9. The two-story, 92,000-square-foot project was designed by Pasadena-based Gonzalez Goodale Architects, who are working on all

three new schools in the 4000+ student complex, which share cultural and athletic facilities.

Considering its historic site, the K-5 school is notably contemporary, hinting at a new direction for the LAUSD and a focus on modern design throughout its multibillion dollar bond program. "We're helping create a new image for the LAUSD," commented project architect Chung Chang.

The building is clad throughout with dark zinc paneling—which wraps around most of its corners—offset with painted plaster and perforated metal flashes of orange, gray, yellow-green, and white. Inside a lofty entrance portal, the school stresses transparency and connection: Most of the public spaces are open air, including outdoor hall-

ways, an exposed grand stair, open flanking stairs, al fresco cafeteria seating, and skylit canopies. The east and west branches of the school are connected by two large courtyards. Circular skylights and perforations above provide more exposure.

The double-height library, patterned in colorful orange and white and fronted with a large glass curtain wall, is the most dramatic public space in the school. Meanwhile, on top of the parking lot is a large track and playing field, which will be shared with the adjacent middle school. Public art pieces like murals and a large mosaic embedded into a play area add decoratively instructive touches.

The K-5 school, which houses two pilot schools—the NOW Academy and the UCLA Community School—literally looks up to the middle and high schools, which are several feet higher in grade. Those will be finished next fall. Much of the middle school's exterior features similar wraparound zinc panels,

**Clockwise from top left: View of the school's eclectic form from one of its two courtyards; the expansive, and light-filled library; the west facade features irregular window patterns as well as fins to minimize harsh light; the south facade's tall entryway.**

while the 2,440-student high school is shaped to echo the form of the Ambassador, with its monumental entry and angled wings. Finishes, however, will be contemporary, highlighted by a multi-floor glass curtain wall that will allow onlookers on Wilshire Boulevard to see into the classrooms in use. The school auditorium will take the same dimensions of the former Cocoanut Grove nightclub, incorporating that classic club's eastern wall and one of its original canopies. As they prepare for future events, administrators will perhaps be challenged in a good way to compete with the ghosts of a past that once inhabited the nightclub. **SL**

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**STOOP TO CONQUER** continued from front page even working for free.

"I think some people's attitude right now is to just get the job and worry about the consequences later. They're low-balling us to get projects," said Jess Mullen-Carey, principal at Silver Lake firm Make Architecture. He said his firm recently was passed over for a retail center and car wash in Long Beach from a client with whom they had worked successfully in the past. There were "a host of reasons" they didn't win the job. But a major one, he believes, was that the winning firm's proposed fee was two-thirds the amount of any other bid. "We couldn't work with what they offered," he said. "There's no saying they won't be adding services down the line."

San Francisco architect Cary Bernstein sees a similar "deal with it later" trend in her city, where she says the biggest problem she's come across is architects willfully underestimating what construction costs are going to be on a job. "I think some people would just get the job and take the risk of potential friction later," she noted. She pointed to a competing firm that offered a construction cost of about \$300 per square foot for a house in the heart of San Francisco with extreme green features. "I said, no way, that's just not possible," said Bernstein, of the offered fee. "Is there a project to be done for that money? Possibly. Is that going to be what the client wants? Probably not." She continued, "You have to think about whether you're being honest with the client."

Part of the blame, said Bernstein, goes to cash-strapped or inexperienced clients, who are much more likely to believe unrealistic projections in tough times. "They're not looking for real numbers, they're looking for what they want to hear," she said. Desperate clients, said several other architects, are also encouraging firms to offer drastically reduced fees or free work upfront like drawings and documents to try to win them over. Many firms said they could do little but comply, especially when some clients might just forego using an architect altogether to save the money. Mullen-Carey said his firm is now delivering free floor plans for a client who is considering them for a 5,000-square-foot office project in LA, even though it "goes against every bone in my body." But

in this climate, he said, "We feel if we have to spend a few hours on some basic layouts it's generally worth the effort."

Bo Sundius, founder of the small LA firm Bunch Design, has also performed free schematic work and has been willing to accept virtually no profit on a few projects just to keep things moving.

"We try to keep as many projects going as possible," said Sundius, whose firm has taken commissions with terms as low as 10 percent of construction cost in recent months. "If there's a slow bleed we can handle that. But as soon as you start hemorrhaging money you're in trouble. When you're doing nothing you're hemorrhaging."

Even more drastic, some would say non-collegial, tactics are drawing attention. One firm, Santa Monica-based Boto Design, recently sent out a note promising "a referral fee will be paid to all brokers upon securing an architectural commission."

Will Wright, director of government and public affairs for AIA/LA, sees the recent habits of underbidding and even stretching what's possible as a symptom of several problems in construction, including a "culture of change orders," in which prices are rarely static, and the "flawed" design-bid-build model that leaves both clients and architects vulnerable to unforeseen changes down the line. One solution, now under consideration by the AIA at many levels, is "Integrated Project Delivery," where, among other things, all parties are part of a single team and are all contractually obligated to hold up their end of the bargain.

Meanwhile, many worry that the cost of driving down rates will linger long after the recession is over. "If everyone starts dropping their fees to a bad spot what are you going to do? Not do it and become extinct?" said Mullen-Carey. Others say the strategy will hurt firms in the short run as well as the long run. "It's a slippery slope when you're cutting fees to get jobs," said Roger Sherman, principal at LA-based Roger Sherman Architecture + Urban Design, who said he saw one firm underbid his fee estimate on a public project by almost 50 percent. "If it's the kind of client who's going to pick you just because your fee is lower, it's probably not the client you're going to want to work with." **SL**

## AT DEADLINE

### STADIUM REPRIEVE

On October 14, the California state senate voted to exempt a proposed NFL stadium in Industry from review under the California Environmental Quality Act. At press time, the plan was still awaiting approval by Governor Schwarzenegger. If signed, the bill would also nullify a lawsuit by Walnut-based group Citizens for Community Preservation, who claimed that Industry approved the project without sufficiently studying its environmental impact.

### BIG WIN IN MISSION BAY

Despite complaints that SF can be slow to hand out public projects (see article on page one), the team of HOK and Mark Cavagnero Associates has been tapped to design San Francisco's \$200 million Public Safety Building in Mission Bay, which will serve as the new headquarters for the city's police department (currently housed in the Hall of Justice) and the district's police and fire station. The partnering firms also conducted the initial study to determine the best location for the building. It will incorporate an old firehouse, one of the few historic buildings in the area. The city's Bureau of Architecture is designing the interiors.

### COURT RULING

NBBJ has been selected to design the new Shasta County courthouse in Redding, according to an announcement by California's Administrative Office of the Courts. The 173,350-square-foot project, whose site has not yet been selected, would have 14 courtrooms with space for expansion to replace the existing courthouse on Court Street. It would also replace the courthouse annex, the John J. Balma Justice Center, and the Shasta County Juvenile Court. The project has an estimated cost of \$211.8 million and is scheduled for completion in 2014.

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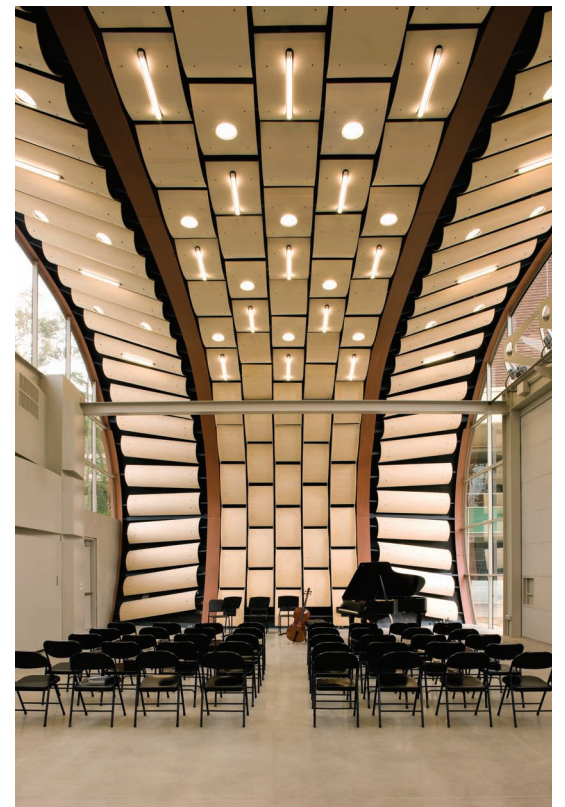
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THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER OCTOBER 28, 2009

## STUDIO VISIT &gt; HODGETTS + FUNG

WILD BEAST THEATER, CALARTS



PLAYMAKER, ACE GALLERY



CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS



DONNA RIO BRAVO LAND PORT OF ENTRY



HUMMER HOME



TOP LEFT AND RIGHT: TOM BONNER; COURTESY HODGETTS + FUNG

Craig Hodgetts and Ming Fung have unusual backgrounds for architects, and that has made all the difference in the work of their Culver City firm, Hodgetts + Fung. Hodgetts studied auto engineering at the now-defunct GM Institute, music and drama at Oberlin, and architecture at Berkeley and Yale. He worked on film and television set design, and at one point hoped for a career in screenwriting. He then went on to help found CalArts and LA-based practice Studio Works. "I would jump into anything," said Hodgetts of his multi-dimensional career. Fung grew up with a movie producer father in Vietnam, moved to the United States in 1971, worked in theater set design, studied architecture at UCLA and at the American Academy in Rome, and started a firm with Hodgetts that was originally more about movie production than architecture.

Since then, the two have parlayed their skills into a body of work that combines drama, artistic flair, and a deep focus on structural intricacy. Hodgetts says he always incorporates what he considers his most important lesson, gleaned from his Yale architecture professor James Stirling, that "buildings have this incredible emotional dimension and can have a personality and be dramatic." The two pride themselves on heavily researched, contemporary designs that reward experience over image-making. The firm often works closely with engineers and acousticians to develop designs, much as films are made. "I believe in working with anybody in an ensemble," said Fung, who added, "We always find ways for the building to perform." **SL**



WILD BEAST THEATER,  
CALARTS  
VALENICA

Opened in September, the new 3,200-square-foot music pavilion for CalArts hosts both performances and classes, indoors and out. Hodgetts said he wanted to make it light and sinuous, in contrast to the large, geometric forms of CalArts' five-level main building nearby. Fung said it was meant to be almost like a sail; a poetic, temporary facility that has now become permanent. It consists of a large, steel, curving, cantilevered roof—composed of a membrane that folds in on itself for extra support. A huge foundation holds the structure down and supports its load. When closed (with two gigantic sliding doors), the hall can seat 80 to 100 audience members; when open, more than 600. The band of glass along the side of the structure, which acts as an acoustic reflector, can swivel hydraulically to help tune the space.

PLAYMAKER,  
ACE GALLERY  
LOS ANGELES

This extensive exhibition, open through August 31, presents projects developed by Hodgetts and his partners between 1965 and 1978, with still-relevant themes like prefabrication, new materials, entertainment, and large-scale housing. Colorful vacuum-formed models, sketches, drawings, and storyboards are all contained inside a series of steel armatures that resemble geodesic domes. The experiments include *Maxx*, a housing "megastructure" made up of plug-in residential units; *Linc*, prefab housing that combines automotive assembly line manufacturing with on-site assembly; and *Ecotopia*, a film treatment. An exhibition introduction sums up this free-thinking period as "a time in which architects were remade as tinkerers in garages who rev up muscle cars, start rock bands, cook up plastic aliens, and, finally, re-imagine the architectural universe."

CENTER FOR THE  
PERFORMING ARTS  
ATHERTON

The 500-seat venue was designed to attract world-class performing groups to sleepy Menlo Park. The \$28 million, 30,000-square-foot building, located on the campus of Menlo-Atherton High School, features a stage that can accommodate a full symphony orchestra. The exterior is painted in Kynar metallic paint to give the illusion of metal cladding. Inside, an acoustical scrim is laser-cut with a pattern based on the surrounding historic oaks. Hodgetts—whose team beat out Antoine Predock and Rob Quigley for the commission—said the high school principal's vision was that the "theater should not be an upholstered, bourgeois experience, but something a bit more confrontational." The official opening was October 11.

DONNA RIO BRAVO  
LAND PORT OF ENTRY  
DONNA,  
TEXAS

While most of the design of this border crossing station in Donna, Texas, was determined by rigid agency protocols, the canopy offered an opportunity for architectural expression. The remote location and slim budget, however, made having skilled labor on hand impossible. So the architects devised a custom system of prefabricated structures. Built much like shipping containers, they could be trucked to the site and bolted to armatures. Featuring cantilevers as long as 60 feet, the structures support translucent membranes that are integrated with wiring and ventilation ducts, and are deep enough to allow access for maintenance.

HUMMER HOME  
COMPETITION ENTRY

For a sustainable housing competition sponsored by Architecture For Humanity, Hodgetts + Fung fashioned a home made out of scrapped Hummers, their chassis bound together to form a habitable skeleton. Inspired by the Cash for Clunkers program, the project, said Fung, gives commentary on the Hummer's obsolescence and on the attitude of people who use such cars. "It's taking a car that's useless and making it into something useful," she said. "Instead of using storage containers, which is common, why not use a Hummer, which is just as big and has all sorts of features that make it as big as a living room."

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- ☐ Landscape Architect
- ☐ Planning/ Urban Design
- ☐ Real Estate/ Developer
- ☐ Media
- ☐ Other

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Hodgetts + Fung Design and Architecture	Paul Danna AIA & Jose Palacios AIA	<b>THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER</b>
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**Lighting Strikes** Today's designers must meet a changing spectrum of demands for lighting that is technically robust yet versatile, while also achieving a high level of atmospheric sophistication. *AN* looks at a trio of lighting firms, new and established, that are standouts in a field emerging with new dynamism and impact.

## Lam Partners Lighting Design

Cambridge, MA

Paul Zaferiou, a principal at Lam Partners Lighting Design, loves skylights. On a recent Thursday, Zaferiou set out a dozen or so scale models, each a variation on a design for a major museum project. Some were outfitted with fritted glass, others with louvers and electric shades, and still others with shading in the form of origami-like geometric shapes. He plugged each into the firm's heliodon, a waist-high contraption that looks vaguely like an exercise machine and enables daylight testing. "Look how beautifully light falls across the wall in this version," he said. "We really enjoy the physical model. The clients and curators get it intuitively, in a way they wouldn't with a computer drawing."

Lam Partners, a 16-person firm based in an old brick

factory just a few blocks north of Harvard Square, was founded in the late 1960s by architectural lighting expert William Lam. "Bill was part of a first generation of lighting designers actually trained as architects," Zaferiou said.

"The tradition he began, and which we continue, is working with the architect early on to conceive the building—even its massing and how it's sited—so that the lighting becomes part of the architectural narrative, both inside and out."

One of the firm's chief tools is the heliodon (*helios* is Greek for "sun"). Created by a Lam staffer with an industrial design background, the device combines new and old technology. The mechanics of the heliodon allow the designers to adjust the relationship between a horizontal plane and a beam of light to match

the daylight conditions of a given latitude. Using commonly available software that can replicate light conditions anywhere, at any time, and in any season, Lam designers are able to test lighting effects on building models under actual solar conditions. They can even use it in conjunction with the real sun by taking the gadget onto the roof.

The heliodon was very useful in Lam's lighting scheme for Randall Stout's Taubman Museum of Art in Roanoke, Virginia, which opened in 2008. The building features curving surfaces inspired by the surrounding countryside and a glass entrance pavilion that resembles the prow of a great ship. "The entire building is conceived as a metaphor of a river running through

a mountain landscape," Zaferiou said. One challenge was to make the main entry both energy-efficient and dramatic—after all, it's an event venue meant to generate income for the museum. "We came up with a luminous stairway," he said. "The treads are glass, and we put fluorescent lamps underneath to illuminate them."

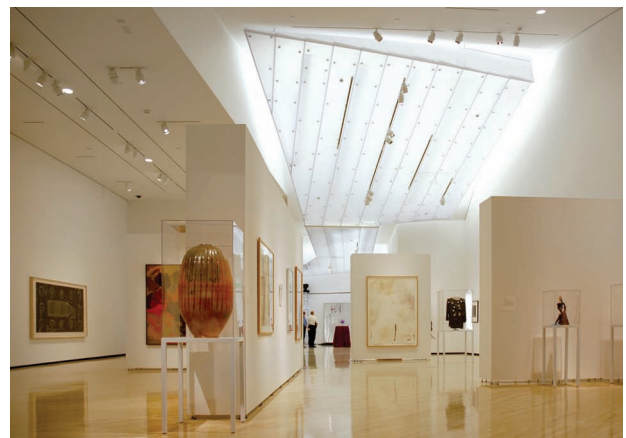
The museum's glass entry pavilion created another challenge for the designers. Lam had to ensure that it was washed in daylight, but also that it didn't get baked in the summer, driving up air conditioning costs. Stout also wanted the pavilion to give the building a luminous nighttime presence. "We got Randall to specify fritted glass—about 80 percent frit—so that a tremendous amount of daylight hits the glass, but

much of it bounces back," Zaferiou continued. "And it shines like a lantern on the outside, even with this high frit. It doesn't take much to make a building look transparent." As for the interior gallery spaces, skylights were cut out of the budget during the value engineering. Wanting to continue the effect of the entry pavilion, however, Lam worked very hard to use electric lighting to simulate daylight.

For the Ross School of Business at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, designed by Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates, one of the biggest challenges was getting the building to be luminous in a place known for long, gloomy winters. "Bill Pedersen's challenge to us was 'Make the building glow,'" said Lam partner Keith Yancey.

Located at the edge of

the campus, the building's most striking feature is The Colloquium, a space consisting of two glass volumes. The volumes crown the structure and cantilever dramatically over two of its edges. "Since this is essentially circulation space," Yancey said, "we placed the lighting on the floor. It makes people look like they're in the footlights." There's also an all-purpose student gathering space called, appropriately for its Michigan location, the Winter Garden. A soaring skylit room, it features blade-shaped reflectors that bounce daylight deep into the interior spaces. "The Winter Garden is so popular," said Yancey, "they have to throw kids out at midnight." **JAMES MCCOWN IS A BOSTON-BASED WRITER SPECIALIZING IN ARCHITECTURE, DESIGN, AND REAL ESTATE.**



COURTESY RANDALL STOUT ARCHITECTS





MARIKO REED



**Previous page, top:**  
University of Michigan,  
Stephen M. Ross School of  
Business, Ann Arbor, MI  
**Previous page, bottom:**  
Taubman Museum of Art,  
Roanoke, VA

**Top right:**  
185 Post Street,  
San Francisco  
**Above and right:**  
Energy Foundation,  
San Francisco

## Revolver Design

Berkeley, CA



CESAR RUBIO

Michael Webb wasn't interested in lighting design at first. In the early '90s, he earned a bachelor's degree in architecture from Virginia Tech and then headed out West to find work. "My plan was to stay for a while and then go back to Maryland, where I'm from," said Webb, "but when I got there, I realized I didn't have much money."

At the time, the country was in the midst of a recession, and in pre-dotcom San Francisco, the opportunities for a fresh-out-of-school architect were few. When Webb was offered a job as a draftsman at local firm Architectural Lighting Design, he considered himself lucky. He worked there for four years before striking out again to pursue what he considered his true calling.

"My intention was to be a full-on architect," said Webb. "I wanted to learn how to do walls and put a roof on and all that cool stuff."

He worked for a time with a residential architect, and then got a job at Architecture & Light, a firm that does both architectural and lighting design, where he exchanged his expertise in one for an apprenticeship in the other. Finally, wanting to get into retail design, he landed at Brand + Allen Architects.

But in spite of the many job changes, Webb found himself typecast. "People wanted me to do lighting, that's all anyone wanted me to do," he said. "For a while I resented it. I saw it as an Achilles Heel. It took me a couple of years to realize that it was a valuable skill. After people kept asking me

and asking me, I thought, this is something I can really do."

After only six months at Brand + Allen, Webb quit and hung up his own shingle in 1997. Within a few days he received a call from the Gap—a contact he had made at his last job—and began working on their stores. A year later, he had more projects than he could handle and asked an old colleague at Brand + Allen, Philip Noble, to join him in a 50/50 partnership. "He said, 'No, why would I want to be just a lighting designer?'" said Webb. "But 12 hours later he called back and said he'd do it."

The pair worked together for the next ten years, producing work that ran the gamut from high-end residential and commercial projects to urban landscapes

and private schools. They took a straightforward, unembellished approach to lighting design, deriving solutions from the demands of the program and space without getting hung up on flashy fixtures or technology. "Some clients want to zero in on an actual fixture, I want to get the concept right," explained Webb. "If it turns out it's just a bare light bulb that works best, that's way better than to force a cool fixture to do a job it's not suited for."

Two of Revolver's current projects highlight the firm's pragmatic philosophy perfectly. The owners of 185 Post Street, a 1908 office building in downtown San Francisco, wanted to modernize the structure after Prada decided not to use the site for a Rem Koolhaas-

designed store. In answer, Brand + Allen coated the ornate masonry facade in epoxy paint and then encased the entire edifice in an all-glass curtain wall. Revolver lit the exterior by outfitting the window wells with simple fluorescent fixtures that interact with the translucent glass to emphasize the project's modernist shell.

Fluorescent fixtures came into play at Energy Foundation as well, an office interior that earned a LEED Platinum rating. While meeting the watts-per-square-foot requirement for the LEED point didn't require much design, Revolver worked with the architect to arrange the fluorescent strips—the project's sole light source—in a staggered pattern that broke up the monotony of the space.

Two years ago, Noble died and since then, Webb has continued to operate the firm on his own. "I have a few people help me with drafting and bookkeeping," he said, "but otherwise I do it all: production, design, aiming the lights. It's a one-man show."

**AARON SEWARD IS AN ASSOCIATE EDITOR AT THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER.**





TONY DEFILIPPIS



COURTESY VORTEX

**Above, left:**  
The Decemberists,  
traveling stage show  
**Right and far right:**  
Playhouse, Hollywood  
**Above, right:**  
Four Points and Fairfield Hotels,  
New York City

## Vortex Lighting

Hollywood, CA



HOWARD WISE

Anne Militello followed a variety of different pathways to architecture, most of them in entertainment. Before moving to Hollywood and founding Vortex Lighting, she lived in Manhattan working on and off Broadway—designing sets for stage plays and illuminating them—a career that has earned her an American Theater Wing nomination and an Obie Award. She also did lighting for punk bands and got her first go at architecture after meeting Patricia Field and lighting her store on 8<sup>th</sup> Street. “All the punks and New Wavers shopped there,” said Militello. “I went down to the Bowery and went into all the shops where the Hasidic men explained to me what down lights were. The project turned out great, but I faked my way through it.”

In the late 1980s Militello started working for Disney. “I heard that Michael Eisner was in New York recruiting Broadway designers to build Euro Disney,” she said. “I was interested in doing something else. They hired me and I wound up in LA working for Disney Engineering for four years, training with them and then doing theme park rides.” Though she never worked on Disneyland Paris, she contributed to just about every other Magic Kingdom in the world. “It was a great proving ground for architectural lighting,” she continued. After leaving Disney, Militello got a job with Universal, where she lit *The Amazing Adventures of Spider Man* ride. The ride’s groundbreaking use of technology earned her a Lighting Designer of the Year Award from Lighting

Dimensions International.

Militello started her company in 1996 and was launched into the architectural limelight with one of her first projects: the New 42<sup>nd</sup> Street Studios building, which won a Waterbury Award in 2000. The building is a city-funded rehearsal studio for the New York performing arts community. Militello outfitted the 200-foot facade with a computer-controlled display of flashing colors that change rapidly, creating a different light show every night of the week. The original installation was primarily made up of tungsten halogen lamps, but in 2007 Militello replaced those with LEDs—1,000-watt fixtures for 30-watt fixtures—reducing the energy consumption by approximately 90 percent.

These days, Militello’s

architectural work is split between artistic installations on building exteriors and hospitality environments, though she has also worked on some museums. “We deal a lot with environment and mood because of my background,” she said. The designer sees a common thread between lighting for the stage and for hotels and nightclubs. “I’m doing the same thing,” she said. “When lighting a play, the first thing you figure out is what’s the story on stage? Here it’s real life, but it’s also a sexy mood play. People have to look good. I certainly know how to do that after working in the theater with these old divas who don’t want their wrinkles to show.”

One of Militello’s most recent projects is The Playhouse, a 750-person

capacity nightclub in Hollywood’s Fox Theater designed by New York firm I©RAVE. While another firm did the dance floor lighting, Militello designed custom fixtures for the space, and equipped the bar’s back wall with LEDs. “We got value engineered out the wazoo, but as long as I’ve got dimmers I can create a mood,” she said.

Militello still does stage lighting, and currently has two concerts on the road: Leonard Cohen and The Decemberists. She also works on her own art and has done gallery shows. She sees these and the architecture work as a triumvirate that keeps her in balance. “I’ve had the opportunity to go crazy on stage, to take color and splash it all over and have a disco party. When I do

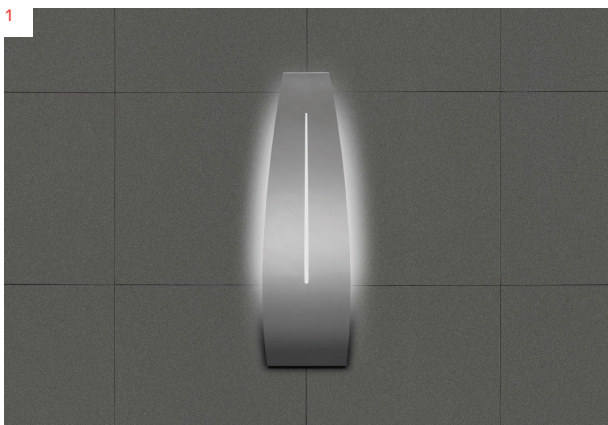
my own work I can do what I want. With architecture I have to make it simple and elegant and non-intrusive and just calm and beautiful. That’s a challenge that I’ve been working with in the last few years.” **AS**



THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER OCTOBER 28, 2009

New lighting for 2009 combines resonant shaping with a spare elegance that will guarantee its appeal for years to come

# FINE FIXTURES



## 1 L'ALE IVALO LIGHTING

William Pedersen of firm Kohn Pedersen Fox designed the marionette-like L'Ale suspension light in 2006. This year, Ivalo introduced a 27-inch-high cast-aluminum sconce to the family. Powered by tiny LEDs, the L'Ale sconce is available in matte titanium, matte slate, and matte graphite finishes with a straight or angled frontispiece. [www.ivalolighting.com](http://www.ivalolighting.com)

## 2 AX20 AXO LIGHT

The new Axo Light collection by designer Manuel Vivian is made of brass and iron with a chrome-plated finish. The swiveling head and arm allows all of the Ax20's styles—wall, ceiling, floor, and tabletop—to be tilted and swiveled, ensuring the light beam always hits the spot. [www.axolight.it](http://www.axolight.it)

## 3 CONVERSE I TRE

For wall or ceiling, the versatile Converse is easily adaptable for residential, office, or commercial use. The opal-polished, white acrylic fixture measures from 16.5 inches by 6.25 inches to 27.5 inches by 11 inches. [www.itresrl.com](http://www.itresrl.com)

## 4 MONO BALD & BANG

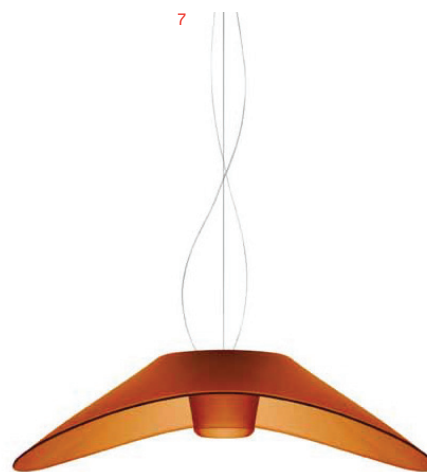
Mono achieves eloquent simplicity, taking the most basic shape of the socket and extruding it into a shade. Fabricated entirely of black Bakelite with a black textile cord, Mono offers a distinctive 5-inch-by-7-inch silhouette. [www.bald-bang.com](http://www.bald-bang.com)

## 5 CHERRY ALT LUCIALTERNATIVE

Designed by Alessandro Crosera, Cherry is composed of two fixed semi-spheres with a light fixture at their intersection. The duo-tone diffuser is made of Plexiglas, making this suspension light not only cheerful and bright, but lightweight, too. [www.altlucialternative.com](http://www.altlucialternative.com)



# FEATURE 19



COURTESY RESPECTIVE MANUFACTURERS

## 6 MO6 MODULAR

Providers of fixtures for Zaha Hadid's Phaeno Science Centre in Germany, Modular is a leader in the field of architectural lighting. The MO6 is encased in a broad (9.5 inch) base plate with an asymmetrical groove in anodized black aluminum, rounded corners, and tilting lamp rings that can be customized by color. [www.supermodular.com](http://www.supermodular.com)

## 7 FLY-FLY FOSCARINI

A winged form molded from a single piece of polycarbonate makes Foscarini's new Fly-Fly, designed by Ludovica and Roberto Palomba, a featherweight fixture that provides 360 degrees of illumination. The 26-inch shape projects light while acting as its own screen to reduce glare. [www.foscarini.com](http://www.foscarini.com)

## 8 TATÌ KARTELL

The new Kartell table lamp from designer Ferruccio Laviani references art deco style, but with a clean, rectangular shape meant for contemporary environments. Tati's internal diffuser of white or black methacrylate or pleated cream fabric is surrounded by a transparent polycarbonate body over a chrome base, allowing it to have a different appearance depending on whether its bulb is on or off, bright or dimmed. [www.kartell.it](http://www.kartell.it)

## 9 AUREOLA YAMAGIWA

Japanese designer Kazuo Motozawa revisits one of his most popular—and collectible—designs of 1960, reinterpreting the chrome-ringed Aureola with a light touch. The halogen lamp is made of steel and available in a chrome or white finish, measuring 5.5 to 7.5 inches tall. [www.yamagiwausa.com](http://www.yamagiwausa.com)

## 10 ZEBRA LUXIT

The architectural lighting company Luxit puts an emphasis on technology, and Zebra is typical. Drawn aluminum frames—rectangular, square, or rhomboid—suspend T5 fluorescent tubes behind a translucent polycarbonate screen. The series includes wall-mounted and ceiling-suspension models. [www.luxit.it](http://www.luxit.it)



OCTOBER

WEDNESDAY 28  
**LECTURES**  
**Michael Dear**  
**Geohumanities: Art, Science and Text on the Edge of Place**  
1:00 p.m.  
UC Berkeley College of Environmental Design  
315A Wurster Hall, Berkeley  
www.ced.berkeley.edu

**Jason Zedeck**  
**Design and Law: In the Mix**  
7:00 p.m.  
UCLA Extension  
10920 Lindbrook Dr.  
Los Angeles  
www.aigalosangeles.org

**EVENTS**  
**City by Design**  
**Book Launch Party**  
6:00 p.m.  
AIA San Francisco  
130 Sutter St., San Francisco  
www.aiaf.org

**Tour of the**  
**Hollywood Palladium**  
6:00 p.m.  
Hollywood Palladium  
6215 Sunset Blvd.  
Los Angeles  
www.aialosangeles.org

THURSDAY 29  
**LECTURES**  
**Judith Carney**  
**Black Rice: The African Antecedents of the Carolina Rice Plantation Economy**  
7:00 p.m.  
UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History  
405 Hilgard Ave.  
Los Angeles  
www.fowler.ucla.edu

**Alain Schnapp**  
**Ruins Between East and West**  
7:30 p.m.  
The J. Paul Getty Villa  
17985 Pacific Coast Hwy.  
Pacific Palisades  
www.getty.edu

**Michael Zryd**  
**"Zorns Lemma and A Lecture" by Hollis Frampton**  
7:30 p.m.  
The Exploratorium  
3601 Lyon St.  
San Francisco  
www.exploratorium.edu

FRIDAY 30  
**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**  
**Adrian Ghenie,**  
**Ciprian Muresan, et al.**  
**I've Watered a Horseshoe as if It Were a Flower**  
Nicodim Gallery  
944 Chung King Rd.  
Los Angeles  
www.nicodimgallery.com

**Gaze: Portraiture After Ingres**  
Norton Simon Museum  
411 West Colorado Blvd.  
Pasadena  
www.nortonsimon.org

**EVENTS**  
**An Evening of Curiosities: Fall Member Party**  
7:00 p.m.  
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art  
151 3rd St.  
San Francisco  
www.sfmoma.org

**A Halloween Hoedown**  
7:00 p.m.  
The Hammer Museum  
10899 Wilshire Blvd.  
Los Angeles  
www.hammer.ucla.edu

SATURDAY 31  
**WITH THE KIDS**  
**Scary Stories**  
1:00 p.m.  
Asian Art Museum  
200 Larkin St., San Francisco  
www.asianart.org

NOVEMBER

SUNDAY 1  
**WITH THE KIDS**  
**What's Up?**  
1:00 p.m.  
Museum of Contemporary Art  
250 South Grand Ave.  
Los Angeles  
www.moca-la.org

**Everything Is the Kitchen Sink**  
11:00 a.m.  
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art  
151 3rd St., San Francisco  
www.sfmoma.org

**El Dia de los Muertos**  
12:00 p.m.  
Children's Discovery Museum of San Jose  
180 Woz Way, San Jose  
www.cdm.org

**Hammer Kids:**  
**Drawing in Tape**  
12:00 p.m.  
The Hammer Museum  
10899 Wilshire Blvd.  
Los Angeles  
www.hammer.ucla.edu

MONDAY 2  
**LECTURE**  
**Richard Meyer**  
**The Big Picture**  
1:00 p.m.  
Art Center College of Design  
1700 Lida St., Pasadena  
www.artcenter.edu

**CONFERENCE**  
**The Association for Preservation Technology International's Annual Conference**  
Through November 6  
Millennium Biltmore Hotel  
506 South Grand Ave.  
Los Angeles  
www.apconference.org

TUESDAY 3  
**LECTURE**  
**T.J. Clark: Picasso and Truth**  
7:00 p.m.  
Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive  
2625 Durant Ave., Berkeley  
www.bampfa.berkeley.edu

**EXHIBITION OPENING**  
**In Focus: The Worker**  
The J. Paul Getty Center  
1200 Getty Center Dr.  
Los Angeles  
www.getty.edu

WEDNESDAY 4  
**LECTURES**  
**Adrienne Mayor**  
**The Poison King:**  
**Mithradates the Great**  
7:30 p.m.  
The J. Paul Getty Villa  
17985 Pacific Coast Hwy.  
Pacific Palisades  
www.getty.edu

**Toshiko Mori**  
7:00 p.m.  
SCI-Arc  
960 East 3rd St.  
Los Angeles  
www.sciarc.edu

**Eric Owen Moss**  
**Too Much Is Not Enough**  
7:00 p.m.  
UC Berkeley College of Environmental Design  
112 Wurster Hall, Berkeley  
www.ced.berkeley.edu

**Shane Coen**  
**The New Landscape of Collaboration**  
6:00 p.m.  
USC School of Architecture  
Gin D. Wong FAIA Conference Center, University Park  
arch.usc.edu

THURSDAY 5  
**LECTURES**  
**Christian Moeller and Rob Ley**  
7:30 p.m.  
Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions  
6522 Hollywood Blvd.  
Los Angeles  
www.aialosangeles.org

**Lauren Bon**  
7:00 p.m.  
The Hammer Museum  
10899 Wilshire Blvd.  
Los Angeles  
www.hammer.ucla.edu

**EXHIBITION OPENING**  
**Francis McCormack**  
**Recent Paintings**  
Elins Eagles-Smith Gallery  
49 Geary St., San Francisco  
www.eesgallery.com

**EVENTS**  
**Fowler Out Loud: Worldwize**  
6:00 p.m.  
UCLA Fowler Museum of Cultural History  
405 Hilgard Ave., Los Angeles  
www.fowler.ucla.edu

**Get Engaged**  
7:00 p.m.  
Museum of Contemporary Art  
250 South Grand Ave.  
Los Angeles  
www.moca-la.org

FRIDAY 6  
**LECTURES**  
**Aaron Chappell**  
**Home Building**  
12:00 p.m.  
Farmlab  
1745 North Spring St.  
Los Angeles  
www.farmlab.org

**Steven A. Olsen**  
**Building the Future**  
8:00 a.m.  
Rios Clementi Hale Studios  
639 North Larchmont Blvd.  
Los Angeles  
www.aialosangeles.org

SATURDAY 7  
**LECTURE**  
**Edgar Munhall**  
**Ingres and the Comtesse d'Haussonville**  
4:00 p.m.  
Norton Simon Museum  
411 West Colorado Blvd.  
Pasadena  
www.nortonsimon.org

**EXHIBITION OPENINGS**  
**Samantha Fields**  
Lightbox/Kim Light Gallery  
2680 South La Cienega Blvd.  
Los Angeles  
www.kimlightgallery.com

**Noah Sheldon**  
Cherry and Martin  
2712 South La Cienega Blvd.  
Los Angeles  
www.cherryandmartin.com

**Zhi Lin**  
**Invisible and Unwelcomed**  
**People: Chinese Railroad Workers**  
Koplin Del Rio Gallery  
6031 Washington Blvd.  
Culver City  
www.koplindelrio.com

**Dispatches from the Archives**  
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art  
151 3rd St., San Francisco  
www.sfmoma.org

**EVENT**  
**40th Anniversary**  
**Celebration Weekend**  
10:00 a.m.  
The Exploratorium  
3601 Lyon St., San Francisco  
www.exploratorium.edu

SUNDAY 8  
**LECTURE**  
**Geraldine Knatz,**  
**Steven Erie and Tom Sitton**  
**The Port of Los Angeles**  
1:00 p.m.  
The Huntington Library  
1151 Oxford Rd., San Marino  
www.usc.edu/icw

**EXHIBITION OPENING**  
**Desiree Holman**  
The Hammer Museum  
10899 Wilshire Blvd.  
Los Angeles  
www.hammer.ucla.edu

**EVENT**  
**It's a Mod, Mod, Mod, Mod City: Self-Driving Tour**  
10:00 a.m.  
Los Angeles Conservancy  
523 West 6th St., Los Angeles  
www.laconservancy.org

**WITH THE KIDS**  
**Family Festival:**  
**Poring Over Portraits**  
1:00 p.m.  
Norton Simon Museum  
411 West Colorado Blvd.  
Pasadena  
www.nortonsimon.org

**Target Free Family Day and Festival: Oceanic Art**  
12:00 p.m.  
San Diego Museum of Art  
1450 El Prado, San Diego  
www.sdmart.org

MONDAY 9  
**LECTURE**  
**Elizabeth Mossop**  
7:00 p.m.  
UC Berkeley College of Environmental Design  
112 Wurster Hall, Berkeley  
www.ced.berkeley.edu

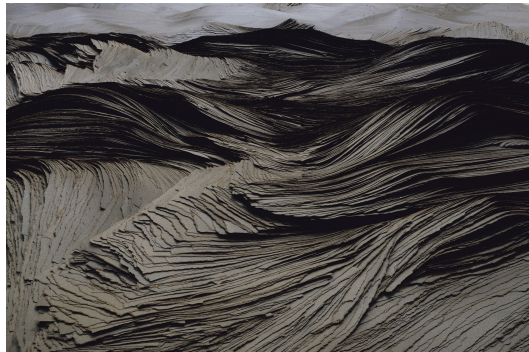
TUESDAY 10  
**LECTURE**  
**Marcelo Pedemonte**  
6:30 p.m.  
Woodbury University Architecture  
7500 Glenoaks Blvd., Burbank  
architecture.woodbury.edu



COURTESY EDWARD CELLA ART + ARCHITECTURE

**R. NELSON PARRISH: SURFACE TENSION**  
Edward Cella Art + Architecture  
6028 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles  
Through December 5

Hovering somewhere on the border between sculpture and painting, R. Nelson Parrish's color-saturated works in *Surface Tension* at Edward Cella Art + Architecture are a playful riff on West Coast minimalism. His series of standing rectangular totems and wall panels arrest the eye with vibrant splashes of color, weaving together two disparate cultures: the aesthetics of the Pacific Northwest tribes in his native Alaska, and the exuberant stylings of Southern Californian surfboard and car design. In panels like *Untitled, #26* (2009, above), blobs of thickly applied resin and indeterminate fields of color are given structure by a rhythm of straight edges and colorful "racing stripes" that weave under and over organic elements. Parrish's ebullient surfaces grab the eye, but a closer look reveals surprising depth beneath them. The effect stems from the artist's laborious creative process, which begins with native Alaskan wood that he gradually, over the course of months, builds up with layers of paint and hand-rubbed coats of resin. Atmospheric hazes and overlapping brushstrokes add to the sensation of an abstract world receding into the picture plane, ending with the wood's natural grain dimly visible in the distance.



COURTESY NCASD

**TARA DONOVAN**  
Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego  
1100 & 1001 Kettner Boulevard, San Diego  
Through February 28, 2010

Tens of thousands of unremarkable objects—styrofoam cups, drinking straws, paper plates, toothpicks, adding paper, straight pins—coalesce into remarkable forms in *Tara Donovan* at the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, the first major museum survey of the eponymous artist's work. The museum's spacious galleries and natural light provide a complementary backdrop for Donovan's works, which garnered her a coveted fellowship from the MacArthur Foundation in 2008. Each of her creations adopts an ordinary object as a building block, repeating, stacking, and twisting it to produce an often monumental shape. Sometimes the result is a standalone sculpture: *Untitled Pins* (2004) comprises thousands of steel pins, held together by nothing more than gravity and friction in the shape of a densely packed cube. Other works build on the architecture of the gallery itself, like the dreamy *Haze* (2003), in which Donovan blankets the gallery walls with layers of translucent plastic drinking straws, rendering the space akin to the interior of a cloud. Elsewhere, the effect is much more earthly: *Transplanted* (2001, above), on display to the public for the first time, is an abstract mountainscape formed from layered sheets of torn tar paper, whose jagged edges produce ridges and whorls in the rocky landscape.



## New Sensations

### Automatic Cities

Museum of Contemporary Art  
San Diego  
700 Prospect Street, La Jolla  
Through January 31, 2010

Ann Lislegaard, *Crystal World*  
(after J.G. Ballard), 2006.

On a recent Thursday evening, only a handful of people wandered through *Automatic Cities*, which fills the main level of the Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego's building in La Jolla. Of two architecture-themed exhibits this year, this is surely the more interesting, but an earlier show of work by young San Diego architects is the one that drew the crowds. The public is apparently more eager to view architecture in the form of homes and other familiar structures than to consider the connotations of an architecture that is not recognizable as such and requires contemplation and subjective interpretation.

Curated by the museum's Robin Clark, *Automatic Cities* includes pieces by 14 artists, ranging from room-size installations and videos to paintings and drawings. The pieces are architectural in their evocation of space, light, and volume, but none conforms to our traditional notion of architecture-as-building.

The largest and most spectacular is Matthew Ritchie's *The Holstein Manifesto* (2008), three tapered aluminum cylinders that sprawl horizontally across two rooms like the molten frame of a post-crash airplane fuselage. The "nose" rests in the corner of an oceanview gallery. Scattered beneath the cylinders are dozens of black domino-like tiles with human figures cut from their centers. Tucked up front is a circular video screen showing Ritchie's animated video piece *Remonstrance* (2009). One wall is occupied by a large color painting that carries the flowing mercury vibe of the sculpture. These same mercurial forms also adorn another wall, except here the

continued on page 22

## SEEING CITIES OVER HANDLEBARS

*Bicycle Diaries*  
David Byrne  
Viking, \$25.95

*Bicycle Diaries*, the new book by the musician and artist David Byrne, is a collection of musings about everything from art and the art world to politics, language, urban planning, music, anthropology, architecture, and the psychology of warfare. And, of course, bicycling. Byrne organizes his chapters around cities he has visited, generally on concert tours or for art projects. His diaries therefore reflect the importance he places on physical context. As he says in the beginning of the book, cities are, to him, reflections of their inhabitants' values, "not so much as individuals, but as the social animals we are."

Byrne, formerly of the band Talking Heads, writes about Manila, Istanbul, Berlin, Sydney, London, Buenos Aires, and San Francisco. He also discusses New York City, where he currently lives, as well as his native Baltimore,

Detroit, Niagara, and others. Everywhere he goes, he brings a collapsible bicycle in a suitcase and rides around; he finds that his bike provides a wonderful vantage for seeing a city, and the speed and sociability of bike riding lend themselves well to taking in the sights and getting a feel for each place.

At a karaoke party in Manila, someone loads "Burning Down the House," the hit Talking Heads song, perhaps hoping he will sing. In the Australian Outback, Byrne helps a family whose car is stuck in a dry riverbed, only to find the patriarch intent on continuing his original path, even if it means surely getting trapped in sand again. In San Francisco, he attends an exhibit of "outsider" art, and riffs on the relative merits of art by professional artists and outsider (untrained, often unsocialized) artists. The

only difference he sees between professional art and outsider art is that the latter doesn't deal "with the hermetic and convoluted dramas of the art world itself"—a wonderful line.

*Diaries* is a collection of riffs. Byrne goes to a private social club in London, and riffs on the British caste system. In his chapter on Manila—one of the most interesting in the book—he riffs on national narratives and mythmaking after seeing paintings commissioned by the Marcoses. Byrne observes traditional vernacular architecture: "Beautiful architecture without architects." And when he visits a market, he wonders if the "human scale and the pleasant chaos" inherent in such places isn't part of some "unconscious, though thoroughly evolved, plan," something we carry in our DNA.

*Diaries* is not geared to architects and planners. Rather, it's a book for lovers of cities, of travel, of bicycling, and of people. His observations about the built environment, like all of his observations, are somewhat brief, and he seems to be interested in the built environment only insofar as it represents the character and aspirations of the



people who inhabit it or travel through it. Byrne gently mocks "starchitecture," describes the work of noted Danish urban planner and architect Jan Gehl in Copenhagen, London, and Melbourne, and praises Berlin's streets ("I'm kind of in shock—it all works so well"). But *Diaries* is ultimately a travelogue for anyone interested in cities and bicycling.

A cranky reader might complain that *Diaries* is just a series of ramblings, and be further frustrated that the book's title inoculates Byrne against this criticism. Experts may find some of his musings about their respective fields to be lightweight. But it is unfair to criticize Byrne

for straying; for one thing, his writing is eminently readable, and by virtue of being pulled from his journals, the book's sections are short and punchy. For another, his musings are enlightening, fun, and thought-provoking; I kept being struck by the intensity of Byrne's curiosity and by his open-mindedness. And in the end, the premise clearly freed Byrne from any inhibition. As a result, *Diaries* is a fresh, unpretentious, and deeply humanist look at the world.

I have to wonder if the bicycle doesn't have something to do with Byrne's lack of pretension and his humanist outlook. Navigating foreign roads—and New York City streets, for that matter—

Above, left: Cyclists crossing the Verrazano Narrows Bridge, New York City.

on a bike is a humbling experience, as well as exhilarating and liberating. Perhaps this has contributed to Byrne's perceptions about the people around him. Like so many self-professed shy people, he often comes back to and celebrates humans as social animals, and his interest in people informs his views about all the disparate subjects he covers in *Diaries*, including the cities we animals create.

**NICK PETERSON IS A CYCLIST AND PLANNER BASED IN BROOKLYN.**

BICYCLE  
DIARIES



DAVID  
BYRNE

COURTESY VIKING



THE ARCHITECT'S NEWSPAPER OCTOBER 28, 2009

## Cartoonish Seriousness

*Beyond Archigram:*  
The Structure of Circulation  
Hadas A. Steiner  
Routledge, \$43.95

Were Archigram the last Victorians or the first Postmoderns (if there is any distinction between these two)? What is the relevance of the architectural provocation of the neo-avant-garde of the 1960s to contemporary theory and practice? The new book by Hadas A. Steiner, *Beyond Archigram: The Structure of Circulation*, addresses the question of legacy as forthrightly as possible by first conceding that the project of the legendary British group was always less about the architectural product than it was the process of architectural representation and the circulation of architectural ideas. Thus Steiner adopts the rather tricky strategy of dwelling less upon the well-known Archigram iconography, and focusing more upon the medium of its transmission: the titular publication that appeared in nine volumes between 1961 and 1970. For Steiner, “the journal project itself was a form of architectural practice, one in which information about architecture merged, self-referentially, with an architecture of information.”

This fascinating merger occurred incrementally over the lifespan of *Archigram* magazine, and was reflected in the progressive (if heuristic) embrace of

ever-more ephemeral and transient architectural modalities, from a fetishistic fascination with the prefabricated hardware of architectural structure, to the “invisible” software of communications networks. Steiner sees in the evolving content and form of the journal an implicit argument about the status of architectural representation—an argument that has profound resonance in the current professional culture of digitization. The implicit question here is: Can digital technologies (with which Archigram were just beginning to grapple) provide truly new models of imagining architectural and urban spaces, or are they simply more efficient means geared toward the same old ends? Steiner argues in her conclusion that the historical example of Archigram, while answering yes to the former proposition, also demonstrates the deeply problematic nature of the technology of architectural representation—an aspect largely suppressed by today’s design systems that still “prioritize finite objects over organization.”

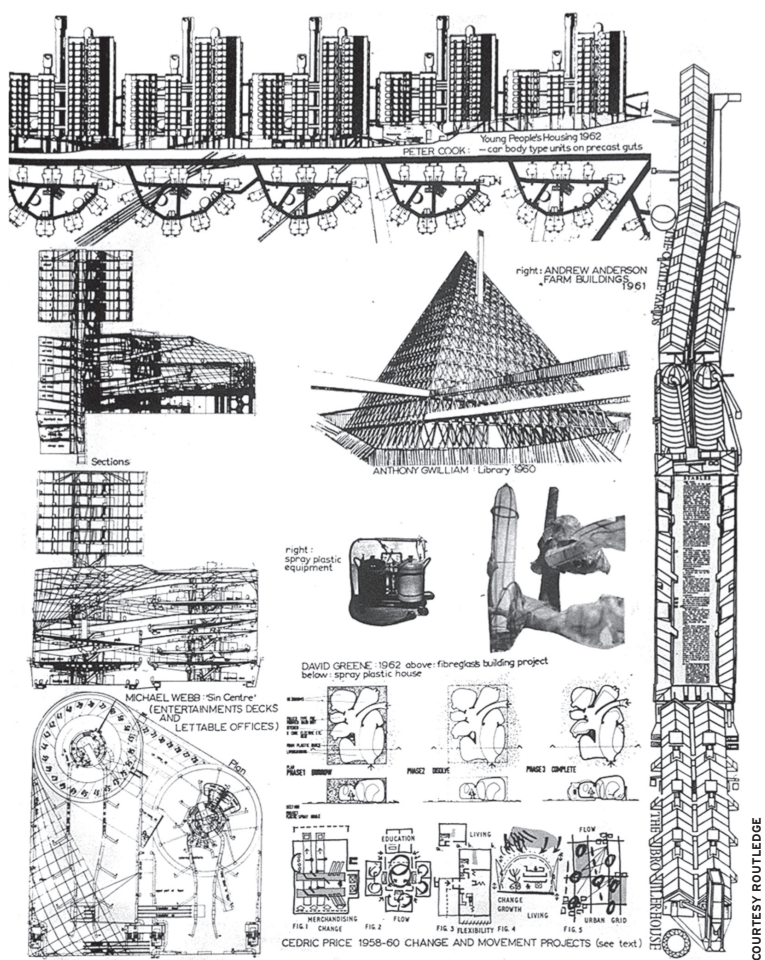
The abstractness of these concerns is offset by the itinerary of the journal through what constitutes a veritable typology of period alternative architectures: space frames, pods, balloons, networks, robots—all collected and displayed with Archigram’s characteristic pop sensibility and masterful grasp of the art of public relations. A nice section of color plates conveys the visual and thematic richness of the magazine, with several large images of page spreads that are wonderful to behold. Fortunately, however, Steiner does not cede

Illustrations from *Archigram 2* by Cedric Price, Michael Webb, and others (1962).

total control of the argument to the content of the issues and the (frankly somewhat arbitrary) editorial selections made at the time by Warren Chalk, Peter Cook, Dennis Crompton, David Greene, Ron Herron, and Michael Webb. She often allows one or two issues to suggest a deeper cultural archaeology. A section on bubbles and pods is one such instance that the author pursues with great success, tracing the fascination for natural structures to its 19<sup>th</sup>-century roots.

But given the emphasis on the magazine medium and the “dissemination of architectural ideas,” it seems strange that Steiner chooses not to contextualize *Archigram* as one of many small architectural magazines being produced in several countries at the time (which, as recent publications and the 2007 exhibition *Clip/Fold/Stamp* have reminded us, it certainly was). Even when her discussion touches upon other participants in the samizdat culture of the ‘60s, like Austrian Hans Hollein, or the French groups Architecture Principe and Utopie, they are not characterized as writers and publishers but merely as designers who had some contact with Archigram. What is lost in this case is a nuanced picture of an intense and polemical network of architectural debate, in which *Archigram* was both central but also highly controversial.

The agenda of *Beyond Archigram*, however, is less about clarifying a historical record or outlining an ideological context than about provoking contemporary designers toward

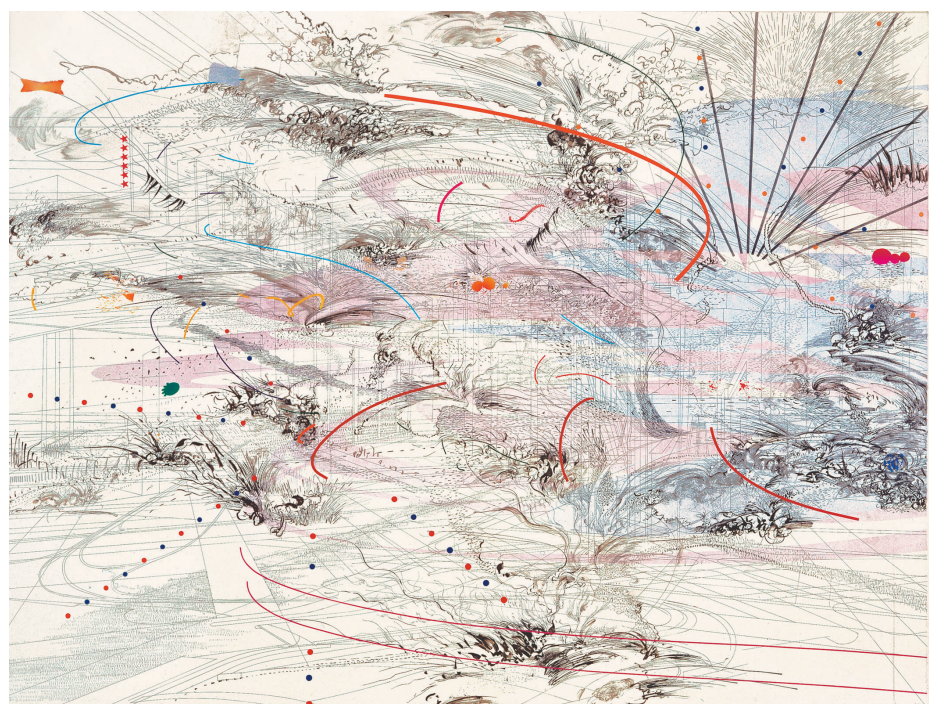


COURTESY ROUTLEDGE

historical reflection about their own practices and values, and today’s culture in which “the representation of ephemeral and virtual environments continues to play itself out within digital discourse as an idyllic form.” As such, Steiner implicitly urges the reader to look beyond Archigram’s only slightly satirical embrace of mass culture, their objectification of women, their unconvincing promotion of drug

subculture, and to see instead a meditation on the vicissitudes of architectural image-making. How can the traditional act of drawing (digital or otherwise) capture the fleeting, situational complexity of movement and social interaction; of the subjectivity of individual perception; of life itself?

**LARRY BUSBEA IS THE AUTHOR OF *TOPOLOGIES: THE URBAN UTOPIA IN FRANCE, 1960-1970*.**



CHRISTIAN CAPURRO

**NEW SENSATIONS** continued from page 21  
images are rendered in black directly on the white wall, instead of in color on canvas. The description of *The Holstein Manifesto* states that spent shell casings are also to be found here, but a close inspection did not

reveal them. Perhaps one is meant to think only of their consequences.

In a low red loveseat in a small video room, one sits to watch videos by Hiraki Sawa, including the black-and-white *Migration* (2003), a 6-minute dreamlike

**Julie Mehretu, *Immanence* (2004).**

sequence in which tiny naked people and animals like elephants and camels parade across window sills, kitchen counters, and household appliances. Sometimes, dark birds fly through the frame. Watching those little people, one might be reminded of Gulliver’s time in Brobdingnag, or a broader sense of our human insignificance amid the great built and natural environments.

Sarah Oppenheimer’s *P-41* (2009) is the most visceral piece in the exhibit. It’s a wide horizontal slot in the wall between two galleries. The slot is framed in wood, as if it’s a permanent detail, and lined with mirrors. As visitors approach, they see their reflections along with fragments of the opposite gallery. Close to the slot, the mirrors reflect the ceiling, and one notices a recessed light, a vent, a fire alarm, and glimpses of hardware. Oppenheimer’s piece refracts and recombines familiar images into a new hierarchy of perceptions.

Bereft of its usual context, Los Carpinteros’ *Home Pool* (2006) is an elaborate fiberglass-and-tile model of a swimming pool, resting atop a steel frame. Chrome pool ladders emerge from shallow and deep waters. A pump or motor whirs faintly, and the water in the pool ripples occasionally. In this presen-

tation, the pool is empty, eerie, and strange, a foreboding zone of cold slick surfaces, deep water, and mysterious noises.

Five large paintings by Julie Mehretu have a gallery to themselves. They remind one of landscapes seen from an airliner: rolling, pastel-hued topographies with occasional dark patches that might be clusters of civilization. Like flying over Alaska or the Great Lakes region or a California desert, Mehretu’s images evoke our place within the cosmos. Her paintings are sensuous and beautiful; with their bold forms and thin lines and curves, they achieve an equilibrium of energy.

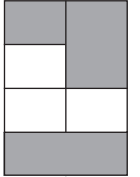
Exiting the exhibit, and then walking through the lobby, strolling on the sidewalk, or sitting in a car brings a new awareness of one’s body in manmade and natural spaces. It’s a vague but persistent sensation that the order of the world is not order at all, only perceptions organized by our brains through years of repetition. An environment has no recognizable shape for a newborn who perceives only light, sound, scent, touch, and taste. In this sense, perhaps imaginary architecture is not all that different from the museum’s earlier exhibit about the ways we relate to traditional architecture.

**DIRK SUTRO WRITES ABOUT ARCHITECTURE AND MUSIC. HE LIVES IN ENCINITAS, CALIFORNIA.**



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BRIGGS NISBET

# TENDING GARDENS

It's probably too early to know if urban agriculture is a passing fad or the next chapter in the movement to restore the connection between the city and its sources of food and drink. The connection was severed after World War II as "progress" put a higher premium on convenience than on taste and variety, and urban "victory gardens" lost their necessity and official backing.

What urban agriculture posits is the cityscape as a commons—and an active citizenry prepared to cultivate it. This wonderful word, *cultivation*, is much missing now in the metropolis. The cityscape has become an odd place, full of settings that seem alive until you actually experience them. If we accept that everything outside of buildings is potentially "cityscape," a frightening amount of it seems to belong to no one. Between a public sector that approaches that cityscape as something to be minimally and mechanically maintained, and a citizenry that often sees its obligations as almost non-existent, we are left with a patchwork of private sponsorship.

Without a citizenry willing to cultivate, you can't even sustain a victory garden. The difference between what was installed in San Francisco's Civic Center and the allotment gardens at Fort Mason, for example, is an active community keeping it in good shape. Interestingly, the latter are administered by the National Park Service, which charges a nominal annual rent for a 5-by-20-foot plot and administers a long waiting list. There's a degree of turnover, but slow enough that newcom-

ers can benefit from old-timers, that the community can share some of its costs, and that there's a tradition that encourages diversity, but also demands a level of participation.

When Shunryu Suzuki, propagator of Soto Zen in northern California, arrived here, he may have been thinking of "Instructions for the Cook," an essay by Eihei Dogen, the 13<sup>th</sup>-century founder of Soto Zen, one of the three sects of Japanese Buddhism. He notes that being the cook at a monastery is a shortcut to enlightenment if you take the work seriously. Even hanging out with the cook can be helpful, he notes, telling of his encounter with an old man, a cook, gathering firewood in the hot noon sun. "Shouldn't someone else do that for you?" he asked. The old man glanced over. "Other people aren't me," he said. Suzuki proposed an ethic of self-sufficiency for his community in which raising vegetables and preparing food had a central place. There is something in that gesture that is directly relevant—the medicine we all need—to cure the barrenness of most cityscapes. Urban agriculture has similar motives: learn to cultivate here, and you may cultivate there—and there. Rooted in cooperation, cultivation is also innately personal, an expression of who we are.

The University of California at San Francisco recently commissioned Topher Delaney and Seam Studio to design, install, and maintain a small garden around a building that it owns in the city's eastern neighborhoods, across from a public park. The garden fits between the

building and the street, triangulated so what's planted there can really be seen and experienced as you walk along. The raised beds are protected by metal barriers from dogs and debris. Written on them are the plants' Latin names. This is a medicinal garden, a source of remedies for people whose cultures still use them. They come and take leaves and cuttings. It's likely that other gardens will be planted in the neighborhood, now that people see that it can be done. The medicinal garden is tended by a real person, Oscar Fuentes, who made the metal barriers and planted everything that grows there. In an area where the streets are often bare of vegetation, the medicinal garden is thriving. It makes the park seem untended by contrast.

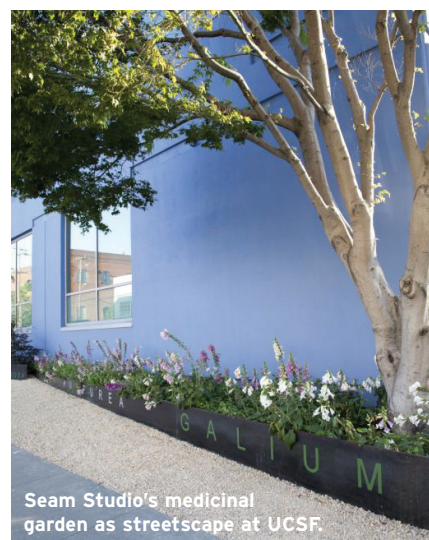
It is untended. Like other public settings, the amount of human involvement in its cultivation has steadily diminished. What if, on the other hand, it was run jointly with the community? What if neighbors had actual plots that they could garden on their own? What if the streets became an extension of the park, with the city's encouragement for people to garden there, too? What if the public realm was restored as a *commons*, in other words, rather than as the no man's land it has become, controlled by cities that can no longer afford to cultivate it, as they briefly did? The commons is not a private realm, but it exists for the community that shares and cultivates it.

As long as the cityscape is someone else's problem, it will be full of dead zones. As long as the public sector and

its employees assert a monopoly over it, preventing its cultivation, it will stay as uninviting as it is—or get worse. It doesn't have to be this way. If local designers, gardeners, and artisans in the private sector are enlisted in its cultivation, as UCSF did with its medicinal garden, their imagination, knowledge, and best practices can be an inspiration for others—a crucial step in reclaiming the cityscape as a commons and involving citizens in its cultivation.

Cultivation is work. You don't put lettuce on the table without planting it, watering it, warding off the pests, and harvesting it at the right time. Urban agriculture is really a metaphor for any and all efforts to reengage the community in cultivating the cityscape, at every level that makes sense. Cultivation requires small-scale, fine-grained, locally-sustainable approaches—it's more work, but it's the only way to revive the cityscape as a commons—urbane, alive, uniquely ours.

**JOHN PARMAN IS AN EDITOR AND WRITER BASED IN SAN FRANCISCO.**



Seam Studio's medicinal garden as streetscape at UCSF.

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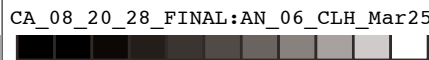
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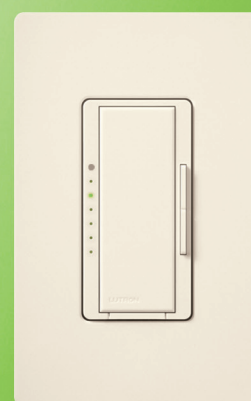


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